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# A Moving Imagination in Spaces of Distress: Teacher and Student Agency in a Science Classroom

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# A MOVING IMAGINATION IN SPACES OF DISTRESS: TEACHER AND STUDENT AGENCY IN A SCIENCE CLASSROOM

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Dissertation Abstract

A Moving Imagination in Spaces of Distress:
Teacher and Student Agency in a Science Classroom

This qualitative study explored the ways in which our classroom community (students and teacher) engaged with humanizing pedagogy in a seventh grade science classroom, toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community, and the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognized in our science classroom, school and/or community while utilizing the process of teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR) (Adamian, 2015) and Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed) (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015).

This study examined the complexities of mutually engaging across differing positionalities while intentionally working in spaces of distress (e.g. push and pull between oppression and liberation). The findings demonstrated the ways in which building a beloved community while situated within an oppressive U.S. schooling system, supported students and teacher toward cultivating pedagogy rooted in love and agency, with a collective commitment toward social justice. As a result, this study contributed toward expanding the possibilities for teaching and learning toward social justice in constricting institutional contexts that honor students and teachers relationships while simultaneously defining for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we are.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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I appreciate you and I love you. You all know how much I admire you and the deep gratitude I hold for your love, trust, and support. I am honored to imagine with you and move alongside you in our struggle for justice...

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## Introduction

Three years ago, as I was walking by one of my seventh grade students, she stopped working and asked, "Ms. Adamian, remember when we were talking about elephant tusks and poaching the other day?" I responded, "Yes." The student continued, "I think it's wrong that people kill elephants for their tusks. It makes me really sad." I replied, "When you get older, you should do something about it." My student nodded and continued working. As I began walking away, something didn't feel right about our exchange. I reflected on our conversation and recognized that I had contradicted my own stance on teaching and learning toward social justice. This experience rattled me, causing me to think deeply about the questions teachers often ask their students. Such as, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" or take the stance of "teach them now, so that they can use the knowledge later." When we act in these ways, we position young people in static, disempowering, oppressive spaces where their knowledge, emotions, and passions are to be stored and used at a later date.

Our conversation caused me to critically reflect on the ways in which my commonsensical assumptions were generating barriers for the students I was working with in a classroom that strived to be justice-centered. At the time of this interaction, we had been working as a classroom community developing liberating discourse, problematizing the curriculum, working through crises, and forging relationships rooted in building community, trust, and respect. We were working on reclaiming our legacies, developing self-worth, and building a classroom culture where students were engaged with and part of the curriculum and were able to be their full selves.

At the same time, I was perpetuating oppressive practices by not recognizing and humanizing students' experiences and actions *now*. I was waiting for them to *become*, instead of honoring their humanity and agency at that very moment. I highlight this particular moment to share the lesson I learned that day: By acknowledging that anti-oppressive education is a process that teachers and students must actively engage in – serves to dismantle the notion of equity as something students and teachers may benefit from at a later date. If teachers are serious about creating and sustaining equitable classrooms and schools alongside their students, we must challenge the notion of focusing on what young people are going to *become*, by focusing instead on recognizing, loving, and respecting who they are right *now*.

To this end, the relationship between students and teachers working toward liberation exists in a space of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) and is a story that largely goes untold. Gaining insight into the relationship between students and teachers carves out a space to share the humanizing practices of teaching and learning toward social justice. In this way, an epistemology that relies on the recognition that teaching and learning are acts of love is a crucial component of creating and sustaining equitable classrooms and schools that honor students, teachers and the communities in which they live and work. Indeed, "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). It is within this context that legacies are shared, realized, and new stories have the potential to transpire.

## Background and Need for the Study

The purpose of U.S. public schools has been driven by the dominant culture's

discourse and norms since its inception. A legacy of Eurocentric policies and practices rooted in free-market tactics have posited that the sole purpose of U.S. public schools is to produce human capital in order to meet the needs of the market economy (Apple, 2006; Engel, 2000). Exclusive emphasis on producing human capital by means of the public school system was systematically embraced during the George W. Bush administration, and reauthorized by President Obama's administration (e.g. No Child Left Behind and Race to The Top).

Propelled by the launch of Sputnik in 1957, U.S. educational standards have deemed Eurocentric curriculum and practices to be the knowledge of most worth, purposed for U.S. economic gain in the global marketplace. Schooling in this way normalizes free-market tactics and justifies the hierarchical practices that promote decentralization, vying for rigid, mass-marketed, scripted schooling with no regard for the communities that public schools are supposed to serve and reflect (Apple, 2006). Consequently, the move towards standards/ standardization has resulted in greater tracking of students (Oakes, 2005) and unending regulation of students and teachers (Fuller, 2003). In this way, the oppressive patterns of neoliberalism – with its ongoing production of common sense – are justified in sustaining a hegemonic culture that is reproduced through public schooling, attempting to strip students and teachers of their identities, dignity, desires, hopes, and dreams.

State and federally mandated education policies honor dominant cultural practices which deliver inequitable funding, dehumanizing curriculum, and testing strategies that place the blame on teachers and students for the pitfalls of our system, and continue to shift the discourse about poverty, institutional racism, and a negligent capitalist system. For example, in 1965, the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) pledged to create and sustain equitable schools and equal access for all students nationally.

What the ESEA neglected to address were the systemic inequities that perpetuated poverty, inequitable funding for schools, racial and class segregation, and the crucial need to revolutionize the Eurocentric curriculum and practices within U.S. public schools, alongside the inequities found at the state and local level.

The ESEA neglected to acknowledge where the heart of the problem resided. The inequities found within public schools would not be mitigated with accountability and rigorous curriculum driven by free-market tactics. The heart of the problem was and is still beating within U.S. classrooms and more predominantly impacting underserved communities of color. Students' and teachers' hopes and dreams have become scripted with rigid curriculum that purports knowledge as a means to an end (Apple, 2007). The practice of democratic values, equitable funding for all public schools, and the art of teaching and learning have been strategically silenced from mainstream educational discourse and practices.

In 1983, Ronald Reagan warned us that we were "a nation at risk." Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education solely placed the blame for U.S. economic failures on public school system (Gabbard, 2007). These attempts to "reform" education were based on the increased demand for human capital, therefore focusing on and justifying core subjects that upheld Eurocentric knowledge and the assimilation of racialized communities. More specifically, "these school literacies were characterized by a view of knowledge as stable, standard, decontextualized, bounded, and situated in clear hierarchies that privileged the 'official knowledge' of dominant groups" (Apple, 2007, p. 439). Simultaneously, the discourse placed the blame on teachers and students for the gross inequities produced by the free-market, once again effectively shifting the discourse away from the onslaught of

neoliberal policies and the looting of resources from communities of color.

Indeed, neoliberal policies and practices suffocate the democratic ideals that schools and communities deserve to experience. Neoliberal frames confirm, promote, and perpetuate the unjust status quo in regards to the inequities they produce and deliver dehumanizing tactics in prepackaged lyrics framed as common sense. For example, neoliberal policies promote the production of knowledge as a means to an end and legitimize the dominant culture's discourse which posits that the sole purpose of schooling is to provide the necessary skills for students to participate in the market economy (Engel, 2000).

Oppressive, dehumanizing education that works to strip students of their identities and normalizes hegemony in the name of capitalism is an act of violence against youth (Freire, 1970). "For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human" (Freire, 1993, p.72). Therefore, exploring the ways in which students and teachers link their schooling experiences with racial, gender, economic, and youth injustice inspires the development of new frames that work towards the development of equitable public schools that underserved communities deserve.

Fear, standardization, and competition are examples of three neoliberal frames that contribute towards normalizing oppressive schooling practices and the privatization of public spaces (Kumashiro, 2012). Below, I discuss each of these frames and the ways in which they perpetuate commonsense thinking and practices. Naming these frames and problematizing how they influence educational practices and policies evokes the development of new frames rooted in social justice.

The first frame relies on fear-driven tactics and policies. For example, A Nation at Risk (Reagan's 1980s speech) consistently maintained that the purpose of schooling was to

produce human capital in order to meet the needs of the market economy. Policies such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) reflect a legacy of educational reforms that legalized the looting of resources from communities of color disguised in the false notions of freedom, equality, and choice. Systematically, current neoliberal practices are perpetuated and legalized through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009), which promote interstate competition for federal funding through the Race to the Top initiative (RTTT). The ARRA mandates states to comply with the Common Core and is a policy steeped in upholding Eurocentric curriculum and practices driven by free-market solutions. Such tactics continue to define the purpose of schooling as a means to an end. In doing so, corporate lobbied frames have shaped the commonsensical ways of thinking about high-stakes testing, the dismantling of teacher unions, and the privatization of public schools through the establishment of charter schools. How well schools align their practices with these dehumanizing policies results in sanctions and/or incentives that mirror capitalist notions of winners and losers (Kumashiro, 2012).

Common sense thinking about the purpose of public schools lends itself to a second neoliberal frame that justifies standardized testing (Kumashiro, 2012). Empirical research rooted in statistical analysis (e.g. eugenics movement) holds a highly charged legacy of promoting and perpetuating racist policies and practices that normalized institutional racism by placing the blame on the very groups of people that the policies were strategically designed to oppress (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Current policies and practices that justify inequitable funding for schools and the privatization of public schools are driven by sanctions and incentives based on the results from high-stakes standardized tests. The belief

in the results of high-stakes testing resembles the legacy of racist policies and practices, justified through statistical research that holds no validity, similar to the false reliance on statistical research that justified the eugenics movement (e.g. Crania Americana, Bell Curve).

High-stakes testing places the blame on teachers and students, particularly students of color, and shifts the discourse away from the inequities that are reproduced through current inequitable policies and practices. The results from standardized test scores systematically justify public school closures and the privatization of public schools which predominantly impact communities of color and the forced displacement of students of color. Ultimately, neoliberal frames are normalized within a hegemonic construct that justifies the current context of educational reform rooted in a legacy of oppression. In essence, standardization and statistical research frames education "within the discourse of neoliberalism…construing the public good as a private good and the needs of the corporate and private sector as the only source of investment" (Giroux, 2004, para. 6).

A third framing that perpetuates inequitable schooling conditions is competition (Kumashiro, 2012). Neoliberal discourse justifies competition by hiding behind claims that initiatives like RTTT will solve all of the problems in education leading to a successful market economy. Embedded within this frame are the common sense ways of thinking about choice, meritocracy and the purpose of schooling. Choice renders charter schools as an option for parents to enroll their students in a "better" school. In doing so, choice individualizes the problem by placing the blame on teachers and students as opposed to the systemic inequities normalized through common sense thinking (Kumashiro, 2012).

Inseparable from choice, is the belief in individual mobility while participating in an equal playing field**.** Rooted in the notion of meritocracy, the false perception of choice

renders the privatization of public spaces such as schools as the only viable option for families wanting their youth to receive the education that they deserve. Neoliberal ideology rooted in common sense thinking affirms meritocracy and posits that by working hard and competing for resources, folks will be compelled to do their best in order to reap the benefits of the free-market. Advertising that schooling is the vehicle towards economic gain, discourse about social justice is silenced and dismissed. The practice of neoliberal ideology then translates into the privatization of public schools staking claim in the public sector through the false promises of efficiency and management strategies that resemble that of the free-market (Lipman, 2011). Generating new frames that shift how we think about the purpose of public schools carves out spaces wherein teaching and learning toward social justice is embraced, and the possibility for humanizing curriculum and practices can be honored.

The consistent reproduction of a hegemonic culture that promotes individual-consumers and colorblind actors with "habits, memories, prejudices, mental schemata, predispositions… etc. – that enable people to make sense of their world" unlinked to institutional racism and central to liberation, is reflected within public schools today (Della Porta & Diani, 2002, p. 67). Hegemonic practices and discourse confirm, promote, and justify the unjust status quo in regards to economic, racial and gender inequities in the name of "freedom" and "choice." Such a stance bolsters an uncritical recognition of inequities and challenges the struggle toward sustaining public schools for the public good. Ultimately, free–market tactics diminish the purpose of schooling as a means to an end and serve to problematize students and teachers.

If students and teachers working toward social justice are serious about bringing to

life the spirit of democracy, it is crucial to investigate the ways in which students and teachers cultivate their own critical consciousness and participate as change agents in public schools. Indeed, exploring the ways in which students and teachers negotiate anti-oppressive education while teaching and learning within an oppressive and constricting neoliberal schooling system is necessary (Kumashiro, 2000, 2009). Sharing how students and teachers contribute towards dismantling neoliberal policies and practices that work to reproduce unjust curriculum and practices sustained through sanctions and incentives based solely on standardized test scores, contributes to the work in progress toward social justice in public schools (Fuller, 2003; Sleeter, 2005).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ways in which our classroom community (students and teacher) engages with humanizing pedagogy in a seventh grade science classroom, toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community, and the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognize in our science classroom, school and/or community while utilizing the methodological process of teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR)[1]

[1] tsPAR draws from participatory action research (PAR)/youth participatory action research (yPAR) studies which intentionally honor and center the experiences and knowledge of local communities working toward justice. As reflected in the review of the literature, communities engaged with PAR/yPAR have changed unjust policies and/or practices, transformed their own lives, and the lives of those they love (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Stovall & Delgado, 2009). However, how external supporter(s) (teacher/researcher) experience "formally or informally some kind of praxis" and "the promotion of people's collectives and their systematic praxis," is predominantly missing in PAR/yPAR studies (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 25). Consequently, the absence of external supporter(s) (teacher/researcher) dismisses the tensions, uncertainty, contradictions, and vulnerably of the "co-researchers" relational/methodological process. Thus, naming the existing power relations, while centering the local community's engagement with PAR/yPAR, carves out a critical space to grapple with hegemonic systems and practices and further challenge the ways in which educational research perpetuates oppressive practices. In this way, educational researchers may turn their lens onto the relationship between external supporters (including teachers/researchers) and local communities (including students/young people) engaged in PAR/yPAR that intentionally work to name the hegemonic social structures toward dismantling them.

(Adamian, 2015) and Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed)[2], both of which will be further discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015). Furthermore, through the continued development of one's own critical consciousness, the critical analysis of standards-based curriculum, and the honoring of students' and teachers' identities, the practice of humanizing pedagogy carves out a space for our classroom community to contribute toward the dismantling of dehumanizing and inequitable practices and policies driven by neoliberal ideology.

The practice of humanizing pedagogy will support our classroom community while we simultaneously engage with the process of tsPAR and CRP-Ed in order to contribute toward redefining the purpose of schooling and defining for ourselves who we are. Engaging with the methodological process of tsPAR through the lens of CRP-Ed, not only supports us in navigating our immediate circumstances, but also provides us future means of creatively embarking on situations we have not yet confronted or know about. Thus, embracing community activism as a part of our identity is a crucial component of contributing towards reframing the purpose of schooling and who we are. In this sense, this study seeks to honor our collective knowledge both from a historical context, as historical beings, and as current change agents acting on our world in the present – toward a renaming of ourselves that cherishes our collective relationships, individual selves, and our dignity.

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[2] CRP-Ed consists of four tenets including 1) relational advocacy toward mutual engagement, 2) redefining dominant and hegemonic systems, 3) research as a dialectical space, and 4) critical engagement with policy. These tenets support the ways in which educational scholars approach research, troubling and problematizing oppressive policies and practices. For the purposes of advocacy CRP-Ed requires engaging with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice, while honoring the knowledge and voices of local communities and simultaneously naming the spaces of distress that (for the purposes of this study) reflects how teacher and students work in and through together.

The crux of this study situates the current neoliberal agenda and the inequities manufactured by an amnesia-ridden educational reform movement and how our classroom community experiences and negotiates these dynamics in our seventh grade science classroom. For example, standardization and state mandated Eurocentric curriculum are two oppressive practices that we will negotiate on a daily basis while simultaneously working towards building a beloved community that honors our identities, hopes, and dreams (hooks, 1995; Ginwright, 2010).

Exploring the particular challenges and triumphs that we experience through the practice of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2004/2008) while simultaneously negotiating with state mandated standards, has the potential to inspire new ways of thinking about teaching and learning in public schools. This study shares the ways in which engaging with tsPAR and CRP-Ed in a seventh grade science classroom inspires student and teacher agency, supports anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2015), and simultaneously generates spaces of hope, healing and transformation (hooks, 1995, 2003; Ginwright, 2010).

When students and teachers seek to redefine the purpose of schooling it requires exploring the ways in which anti-oppressive education brings to life teaching and learning toward social justice in public school classrooms. Indeed, teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways requires us to enter the classroom everyday with intention, purpose, and courage. With intention, this study will attempt to disrupt the curriculum that is designed to reproduce the unjust status quo. With purpose, this study will seek to agitate and problematize the very structure that normalizes oppression, marginalizes the other, and attempts to dehumanize teachers and students. With courage, this study will work toward building relationships rooted in love, compassion, vulnerability and healing.

## Research Questions

This study attended to the overarching research question: In what ways can our classroom community engage with humanizing pedagogy and research towards the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of students and teacher and the building of a beloved community?

1) To what extent can our classroom community's engagement with tsPAR and CRP-Ed contribute toward naming the spaces of distress and defining for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we are?

2) To what extent can our classroom community honor the principles of tsPAR and the tenets of CRP-Ed while simultaneously negotiating with and pushing back on state and federally mandated science standards?

## Theoretical Framework

When teachers and students participate in redefining the purpose of schooling, schooling transforms from the false notion that the sole purpose of schooling is where free-market solutions are sought toward the recognition of a public space where teachers and students work towards healing their own hearts and ultimately, the heart of democracy (Palmer, 2011). Therefore, contributing toward reframing the purpose of schooling requires redefining what it means to be a teacher or student working within a hegemonic system rooted in a legacy of heteronormative White male privilege (Alexander, 2010; Fanon, 1952; Karabel, 1984).

Problematizing our situatedness compels us to recognize that teaching and learning toward social justice in public schools means to consistently work within a space of contradiction driven by common sense tactics (e.g. standardization, production of human

capital, dehumanization, and fear) (Kumashiro, 2012). Simultaneously, we do this work while knowing that the dominant cultural discourse is embedded within the Common Core and state standards, normalized, measured, and regulated with high stakes testing (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter, 2005).

We acknowledge that both students and teachers will be monitored, regulated, and punished based on how well we have taught and learned the dominant narrative. We do so, knowing these results will support a neoliberal frame that will be used against us and will be used to define us (Kumashiro, 2012). We recognize that when we enter our classroom, we enter a space that holds a legacy of inequities shaped by the bombardment of racist policies and practices (and current neoliberal reform tactics) justified through common sense thinking.

In a similar way, we know that placing the blame on teachers and students is merely a tactic used to shift the discourse away from oppression and the bigger picture (Kumashiro, 2012). By redefining ourselves, we reframe what it means to teach and learn in public schools and dismantle how we are defined by the dominant cultural narrative. Inspired through humanizing curriculum and practices, we transcend the victimization of their blame and define for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we are.

Therefore, this study draws from three humanizing frameworks including critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2004/2015), and the notion of beloved communities (hooks, 1995; King, 1957; Royce, 1913/2001). These frameworks support teaching and learning toward social justice in public schools, while simultaneously pushing back on the neoliberal agenda. When put into practice, these theoretical bases

support teaching and learning toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community, and the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognize in our science classroom, school and/or community. Below, I discuss the ways in which these frameworks support this research study and honor the process of contributing toward redefining the purpose of schooling and who we are.

**Critical Pedagogy**

The practice of critical pedagogy by teachers and students reflects a humanizing epistemology that acknowledges teaching and learning as acts of love, "For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Consequently, the practice of critical pedagogy works to transform oppressive schooling conditions into liberating sites where social justice is at the core of classroom practices (Giroux, 2004). In essence, critical pedagogy demands a break from the past and the development of new anti-oppressive practices reinvented through action and reflection and generated from the constant grappling with knowledge and power (Giroux 1997, 2004; Freire, 1998, Kumashiro, 2009). Indeed, the practice of critical pedagogy has the potential to transform dehumanizing static spaces, from which the oppressed need a break, into fluid transformative spaces that honor their identities (Tatum, 1997).

Critical pedagogy inspires students and teachers to, "challenge, resist, and change the root cause of their suffering [and] is at the core of any democratic process" (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 31). In this sense, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Indeed, teacher and

student agency is an exemplar of the untapped bond that can agitate and bring forth movement towards change.

**Anti-oppressive Education**

Anti-oppressive education honors teacher and student agency and is a crucial component of creating and sustaining equitable classrooms, schools, and communities. Teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways agitates dehumanizing curriculum and practices (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989; Kumashiro, 2009). More specifically, anti-oppressive education "constantly turns its lens of analysis inward as it explores ways that its own perspectives and practices make certain changes possible but others, impossible" (p. xxxviii). In other words, anti-oppressive education is about teachers and students acknowledging the partiality of their own knowledge, the knowledge produced collectively (although understood in different ways), and embracing uncertainty (Ellsworth, 1997). Therefore, anti-oppressive education is about working through/in crisis and discomfort and recognizing moments of negotiation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance while teaching and learning toward social justice. In this sense, the practice of anti-oppressive education consistently reminds our classroom community that teaching and learning is an ongoing process, not a means to an end.

**Beloved Communities**

Lastly, how teachers and students work towards cultivating liberating sites while working toward the practice of freedom necessitates a mutual engagement rooted in the principles of a *beloved community* (hooks, 1995; King, 1957). Working toward the building of a beloved community inspires solidarity and trust in the classroom where students and teachers work together in a shared struggle for the "balance between accountability and

freedom in all parts of the educational system" (Candoli, 1976, p. 246). Within the building of a beloved community, "is this generous spirit of affirmation that gives us the courage to challenge one another, to work through misunderstandings, especially those that have to do with race and racism" (hooks, 1995, p. 272). In order for teachers and students to work toward a beloved community, solidarity, trust, and a shared purpose towards social justice rooted in critical consciousness, self-determination, hope, and agency are necessary.

## Educational Significance

This study shares new insights and generates new inquiries in response to teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways in public schools by sharing how our classroom community took action within our own classroom, school, and/or community. This study adds to past and current research studies in regards to contributing toward creating and sustaining equitable classrooms and schools by sharing our relationship (between students, and students and myself) in our life science classroom. For example, this study examined the ways in which we took action in response to the inequities and unjust practices we recognized in our classroom, school and/or community.

In order to contribute toward creating and sustaining equitable classrooms and schools, it is essential that teacher educators, pre-service teachers, and current teachers recognize the crucial need for critical pedagogy in the classroom as a contributing factor toward the transformation of oppressive U.S. educational policies and practices. Educational research shows that students involved in classrooms and youth development programs rooted in the practice of critical pedagogy, and/or participatory action research (PAR)/youth participatory action research (yPAR) are creating equitable classrooms and schools, changing unjust policy, and transforming their own lives and the lives of those they love (Cammarota,

2008, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009; Stovall, 2013). This study honors and developed from the collective knowledge brought forth from empirical research studies that investigated the ways in which young people across the nation worked (and continue to) toward creating equitable schools and communities (Cammarota, 2008, 2011; Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009).

Drawing from the empirical studies mentioned above, this study explored the ways in which our classroom community cultivated our own critical consciousness, engaged with participatory action research, and created anti-oppressive spaces. For example, examining the ways in which teachers and students work together in these capacities is needed because regardless of the positionality of one's stance on the purpose of schooling, educational discourse is popularly immersed within the binary of either the student or the teacher. In this sense, whether the literature is generated from a position towards social justice or from a neoliberal stance, both bodies of educational research have the habit of severing the relationship between students and teachers. What this means is that the discourse is either about how teachers teach and act or about how students learn and act. Yet, the story of the relationship between the two in regards to inspiring agency and the practice toward freedom is rarely shared. It is within this space of discomfort and tension that this study turned a critical lens (Kumashiro, 2009). More specifically, the ways in which these spaces humming with emotion, discomfort, and tension which existed in our classroom and school as they related to oppression and anti-oppressive teaching and learning. Indeed, by developing new frames and sites of resistance rooted in the *process* of co-creating liberating spaces by

students and teachers that educational discourse can transcend the deficit perspective that problematizes students and teachers. Framing students and teachers in these ways generates a binary of "us and "them," and becomes an easier target for cooptation, dehumanization, and sites of blame for neoconservative reformists.

Paradoxically, it is within this space of distress that students and teachers generate healing spaces in public schools, as opposed to the commonsensical ways of thinking about abandoning public schools and losing hope in our public spaces. Ultimately, teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways has the potential to transform schooling into public spaces that people look to for freedom, hope, agency, and care - as opposed to a place to blame, justify the inequities, and promote a hegemonic culture.

This study builds on previous research that highlights the ways in which young people participate in counter-action, and also provides insight into the ways in which our classroom community participates together in creating and sustaining liberating spaces in a public school classroom in order for humanizing educational practices to transpire. Additionally, this study builds on past empirical studies conducted in classrooms and communities seeking to create and sustain equitable learning environments. By sharing the process of students and teachers simultaneously, this study adds to previous studies by sharing the relationship of students and teachers working together in spaces of *distress* (Cammarota, 2008, 2011; Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr, & Zeichner, 2007; Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009).

Additionally, this study problematizes the ways in which external supporters involved with local communities/schools engaged in PAR/yPAR work in contradictory ways, and will

explored the possibilities toward expressing the mutual engagement between the external supporter, in this case, me (life science teacher) and the local community (students enrolled in life science class), in addition to the mutual engagement between the students. In other words, this study attended to teachers and students, named the tensions during the relational/methodological process, and troubled the ways in which external supporters engaged with and documented PAR/yPAR studies by employing teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR) in order to name the spaces of distress.

Lastly, one area of scholarship that does not often include students' development of their own critical consciousness, spaces to heal, and participate in critical pedagogy and/or PAR/yPAR, is in the k-12 science classroom. This study filled that gap by specifically looking at the ways in which critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, and working toward a beloved community while engaging with PAR/tsPAR were possible in this age of standardization and the constraints brought about by high-stakes testing and top-down management.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this investigation arose due to the nature of this study. This study took place in a 7$^{th}$ grade life science classroom located in a public junior high school in Northern California. This eight-month study began in August 2015 and ended in April 2016. The participants for this study included myself and the young people enrolled in the 7$^{th}$ life science classes that I taught and learned alongside.

Due to my positionality as both a teacher and researcher, I was mindful of the tensions that emerged between the students I worked with and myself, in both capacities. This tension was honored in several ways. As a classroom community, we consistently

worked to grapple with our moments of tension in order to name our situatedness. As "co-researchers" we shared the ways in which our differing positionalities were negotiated through field notes/journal entries and/or audio/voice recordings of classroom discussions and/or interviews. Additionally, we honored the contradictions that emerged as we engaged with the process of PAR/tsPAR in the classroom, by intentionally naming and/or working to dismantle the power dynamics that emerge due to our differing positionalities and the context and constraints that we were working in and through.

## Definitions of Key Terms

Agentic

The capacity to transform oneself and oppressive spaces or systems (Bandura, 2001).

Anti-oppressive education

> "Constantly turns its lens of analysis inward as it explores ways that its own perspectives and practices make certain changes possible but others, impossible; and it constantly turns its lens outward to explore the insights made possible by perspectives on teaching and learning that have yet to be adequately addressed in the field of education" (Kumashiro, 2009, p. xxxviii).

Common Sense

Oppressive systems and practices normalized through habits of mind and actions (Gramsci, 1971; Kumashiro, 2009).

Ideological Hegemony

> "Systems of practices, meanings, and values which provide legitimacy to the dominant society's institutional interests and arrangements" (Giroux, 1997, p. 6).

Neoliberalism

"Neoliberalism is an ensemble of economic and social policies, forms of governance, and discourses and ideologies that promote individual self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment in the public sphere" (Lipman, 2011, p. 6).

# Chapter II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction

When teachers working toward social justice dream of redefining the purpose of schooling, it requires exploring the ways in which anti-oppressive education inspires critical consciousness and critical agency toward the development of beloved communities. How we choose to teach and learn necessitates redefining what it means to be a teacher and/or student working within a hegemonic schooling system rooted in a legacy of heteronormative White male privilege. Problematizing our situatedness compels us to recognize that teaching and learning toward social justice in public schools means to consistently work within a space of contradiction, driven by common sense tactics and practices – steeped within an oppressive hegemonic culture (Kumashiro, 2009). Common sense refers to the ways in which oppressive systems and practices are normalized through habits of mind and actions (Giroux, 1997). For example, today, common sense tells us that the purpose of schooling is to produce human capital, therefore normalizing market-reform tactics (Kumashiro, 2012).

Consequently, when teachers and students engage with justice-centered practices in public schools, they agitate common sense thinking and oppressive practices through action and reflection (Giroux, 1989; Freire, 1970; Kumashiro, 2009). In doing so, students and teachers participate in the creation of "cultural works that enable communities to envision what's possible with collective action, personal self transformation, and will" (Kelley, 2002, p. 7).

In a similar way, teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways expands the possibilities for teachers and students to navigate, "between lived experiences of oppression and the empowered realization that things do not have to be this way; that change is indeed

possible" (Negron-Gonzales, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, anti-oppressive education is a humanizing epistemology that acknowledges teaching and learning as acts of love.

In this review, I investigate the social construction of neoliberal frames that define the purpose of schooling through common sense tactics (Lipman, 2011; Meiners, 2007; Gramsci, 1971; Kumashiro, 2008, 2012). In addition, I explore the ways in which teacher and student critical agency is a crucial component of creating and sustaining equitable classrooms, schools, and communities, with a particular focus on the practice of critical pedagogy and yPAR in public schools. Finally, this review concludes with an exploration of the ways in which anti-oppressive education comes to life in public school science classrooms.

The crux of this review situates the current neoliberal reform agenda and the inequities that are manufactured by an amnesia ridden, racist and classist – U.S. educational reform movement. I start by discussing how neoliberal frames shape commonsense thinking and justify oppressive policies, practices, and discourses. I then look to the ways in which anti-oppressive education supports humanizing classroom spaces (Kumashiro, 2004/2008), leading to a discussion about the ways in which critical pedagogy is practiced in the classroom (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Giroux 1989; Kincheloe, 2008/2010; Leonardo, 2009). More specifically, I look to qualitative studies that provide exemplars of how communities engage with youth participatory action research (yPAR) and transform oppressive spaces into humanizing sites rooted in resistance, agency, and community change (see Akom, Cammarota & Ginwright, 2008; Cammarota & Fine 2008; Cammarota, 2011; Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2010; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009). Additionally, I highlight research that focuses in on the

use of yPAR in the classroom and the ways in which it inspires student and teacher critical agency student and teacher critical agency, fosters anti-oppressive education, and generates spaces of tension, hope, contradiction, healing and transformation (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; hooks, 1995, 2003; Ginwright, 2010). I conclude with a discussion about the ways in which social justice and human rights education are practiced in public school science classrooms, providing meaningful insight towards expanding the possibilities for liberatory education in a content area such as science.

The contributions by young people, grassroots organizations/local communities, theorists, and educational practitioners and researchers honored in this review often times overlap, intersect, or merge towards the development of something new and cultivate the hope for justice and the practice towards freedom that we feel in our hearts and imagine in our minds. In the pages ahead, I demonstrate how these frameworks have been utilized to push back on the neoliberal agenda and have transformed dehumanizing spaces, into liberating sites where social justice is at the core of classroom and community practices.

**Neoliberal Frames and the Purpose of Schooling**

Neoliberal ideology emerged in the U.S. in the 1980's under the Reagan administration (Harvey, 2005), an administration that supported racist policies and practices including "the war on drugs" in the U.S. and racial segregation (apartheid) in South Africa (Feagin, 2010). Neoliberalism is an ideology that, "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). The emergence of neoliberalism as an ideology was both supported and advertised by the Reagan administration. For example, Reagan's presidential address in 1983

warned us that we were "a nation at risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). His speech solely placed the blame on the U.S. public school system and more specifically points to the role of teachers and students in the nation's economic failures (Gabbard, 2007). Thus, Reagan's linking of public schools and economic failure helped to generate a neoliberal frame that produced the commonsense belief that the purpose of schooling was to produce human capital.

This was just one of many instances when socio-political discourse, both in the U.S. and globally were promoting neoliberalism. In turn, neoliberalism developed as an ideology that would go unquestioned through commonsense thinking. Commonsensical ways of thinking about neoliberalism required the shaping of, "common understandings, myths, and stories that make possible generalized practices and the widely shared legitimacy of a particular social order" (Lipman, 2011, p. 6).

By placing the blame on U.S. public schools for the failure of a U.S. economic system, two neoliberal frames were constructed. These frames shaped the way society would think about the purpose of schooling, while simultaneously shifting discourse away from a fraudulent capitalist system and institutional racism, and the systemic inequities they produced. Seizing the public imagination towards a belief that a weakened U.S. economy was due to the failure of U.S. public schools, neoliberal ideology purported that efficient public schools would make for an efficient market economy (Gabbard, 2007). Therefore, I describe the first frame as, *efficiency through market – based reform*, which defined the purpose of schooling in ways that aligned with free-market tactics, strengthening the belief that the privatization of public schools would improve schooling conditions, therefore improving the market economy. To this end, during the 1980's neoliberal discourse defined

nationwide, that the purpose of schooling was to produce human capital in order to meet the needs of the market economy.

I describe the second frame that emerged as the *deficit ways of thinking about students and teachers*. Within this discourse or ideology teachers were positioned as the problem, or the cause of U.S. economic failure and defined as inefficient, incapable, unknowing, and not working hard enough – particularly those that work with students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. At the same time, students and more specifically students of color, were defined in similarly dehumanizing ways, recognized merely as numbers that were to eventually rise above their deficits, assimilate, and emerge as human capital, in order to meet the needs of a U.S. market economy.

When the dominant cultural discourse places the blame on individuals and/or groups, it distracts people from seeing the bigger picture (e.g. systemic inequities, institutional racism, and a fraudulent capitalist system). For example, since its inception, U.S. public schools have been steeped in a legacy of racist policies and practices. Historically, the maintenance of racist policies such as the exclusion and segregation of students of color were justified through the false biological explanations of genetic inferiority. Affirmed with scientific research studies (e.g. Crania Americana, Bell Curve), people of color were viewed as being intellectually inferior to whites. In doing so, common sense thinking at the time overtly supported the exclusion, segregation, and lack of investment in students of color. Today, commonsensical ways of thinking about genetic inferiority have shifted toward cultural ones, as a way to covertly justify current racist practices and policies. Racial inequality today is covertly reproduced and normalized through common sense practices

(e.g., racial profiling, urban planning, inequitable schooling, segregation, school closures, and college admissions) that are supported by the logic of colorblind frames.

Colorblind racism emerged from the Civil Rights era as the new dominant racial ideology that enables the contemporary reproduction of racial inequity through subtle means that appear nonracial (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Hence, as Bonilla-Silva (2010) proclaims, "despite its suave, apparently nonracial character, the new racial ideology is still about justifying the various social arrangements and practices that maintain white privilege" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 211). This assertion and more specifically, the evolving nature of racism and its present day manifestation, is supported by the theoretical contributions of numerous scholars (see Alexander, 2011; Bobo & Kluegel, 1997; Burke, 2012; Kovel, 1985; Lopez, 2014; Thomas, 2000; Wellman, 1993). Indeed, colorblind ideology relies on the commonsensical ways of thinking about race and racism in the U.S. today that feel nonracial and are facilitated by accessing one's own internalized colorblind frames, or "*set paths for interpreting information*" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 26, emphasis added).

Consequently, colorblind frames support a hegemonic culture by normalizing, shaping, and influencing everyday thoughts, actions, practices, and policies that create and reinforce negative outcomes for people of color (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2016). These frames include cultural racism, naturalization, minimization of racism, and abstract liberalism. Bonilla-Silva (2010) contended that these four frames contribute toward the development and perpetuation of colorblind racism wherein, "whites rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 2).

Of these four frames, the *cultural racism frame* of colorblind ideology replaces genetic inferiority rationales for racial disparities with cultural ones. According to Bonilla-Silva (2010), the cultural racism frame "relies on culturally based arguments…to explain the standing of minorities in society" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 28). The rejection of racist beliefs with regard to the genetic inferiority of people of color creates a framework for what constitutes racism and absolves people from colluding in systems of oppression. By falsely attributing cultural deficits to people and communities of color as an explanation for current gross inequities, racism can be rationalized as a thing of the past, and "the achievement gap," which Ladson-Billings (2006) more justly named "the education debt," as a consequence of cultural practices.

Therefore, through common sense tactics, both *efficiency through market – based reform* and *deficit ways of thinking about students and teachers* gained public support, justifying aggressive neoliberal practices which Harvey (2003) described as, "accumulation by dispossession." Accumulation by dispossession relies on private corporations taking control over public services. In essence, privatization relies on "the restructuring of public services into a market-like industry that results in the shifting of funds, oversight, and accountability from the government to individuals and corporations" (Kumashiro, 2012, p. 38). Hence, by defining public schools as a system intended to produce human capital, the privatization of public schools became commonsensical.

Deeply ingrained within neoliberal ideology is the sustainment and production of racialized performances that seep into the public imagination and, "are central to constructing consent for the privatizing of public goods, including schools"(Lipman, 2011, p. 12). For example, "private is equated with being 'good' and 'white' and that which is public with

being 'bad' and 'Black'" (Haymes, 1995, p. 20). Where this all merges equates in, "this racialized logic [that] justifies privatization of public housing, schools, and health clinics and gentrification through dispossession of urban black communities" (Lipman, 2011, p. 12). Consequently, the deficit thinking of people of color, the dispossession of public spaces, and assimilation tactics that mirror colonial practices and policies justify the "whitening" of public schools. Indeed, "The oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of domination. The earth, property, production, the creation of people, people themselves, time–everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal" (Freire, 1993, p. 58). Neoliberalism then, relies on habits of mind rooted in deficit thinking, thus supporting policies at the federal, state and local-level that grossly underfund, underserve, and then ultimately seize public spaces for profit. Consequently, misguided policies place the blame on teachers and students for the pitfalls of a capitalist system; justifying the systematic takeover of the public schools that are predominantly attended by students of color (Buras, 2013).

Today, the political, social, and economic constructs justified and driven by neoliberal tactics attempt to strip away human dignity and self-determination through the unjust policies and inequities that they perpetuate and produce. The common sense rhetoric of neoliberal ideology in our educational system marginalizes the spirit of democracy in public schools. In other words, neoliberal discourse, with its reproduction of the dominant culture's ideals – not only promotes knowledge as a means to an end for the sake of human capital, but also justifies the status quo and the inequities it reproduces. In response to neoliberal ideology, Giroux (2004) stated that:

Construing the public good as a private good and the needs of the corporate and

> private sector as the only source of investment, neoliberal ideology produces, legitimates, and exacerbates the existence of persistent poverty, inadequate health care, racial apartheid in the inner cities, and the growing inequalities between the rich and the poor. (para. 6)

Consequently, dehumanizing policies and practices including, but not limited to, California's Propositions 187 (which severely restricted the rights of undocumented immigrants) and 227 (which prohibited bilingual instruction), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), tracking, inequitable funding for schools, "the war on drugs" (Leonardo, 2009), and school closures reflect the violent attack on communities of color, and the looting of resources to which young people and communities of color have a right to. These policies and practices confirm, promote, and perpetuate the unjust status quo in regard to the inequities they produce in prepackaged lyrics framed as common sense (Gramsci, 1971; Kumashiro, 2008).

When oppressive educational policies and neoliberal ideology merge, a relentless assault on public schools occurs – corporatizing one of the very few public spaces we have left in the U.S. It is also important to recognize that neoliberalism is only successful by means of redistribution of wealth, not due to the generation of wealth (Harvey, 2005). In this sense, neoliberalism relies on, "the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; [and] colonial, neocolonial, and imperial process of appropriation of assets (including natural resources)" (Harvey, 2005, p. 159). Therefore, by contributing toward redefining the purpose of schooling, we rename the word, and the world. In this sense, "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming" (Freire, 1970, p. 88). Consequently, it is within this space of distress, where the push and pull

between public and private, oppression and freedom, dispossession and cultivation that schooling is defined.

Ultimately, free-market tactics diminish the purpose of schooling as a means to an end and problematize students and teachers. When teachers and students participate in social justice work, schooling transforms from the false notion that the sole purpose of schooling is where free-market solutions are sought, towards the recognition of a public space where teachers and students work toward healing their own hearts and ultimately, the heart of democracy through the practice of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2004/2015; Palmer, 2011).

**Anti-oppressive Education: Teacher and Student Critical Agency**

Kumashiro (2004/2015) describes anti-oppressive education as an approach to teaching and learning toward social justice that, "constantly turns its lens of analysis inward as it explores ways that its own perspectives and practices make certain changes possible but others, impossible" (p. xxxviii). In other words, anti-oppressive education acknowledges that teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways is never fully anti-oppressive, and insists that while one form of oppression is being dismantled, other forms of oppression are simultaneously being perpetuated. More specifically, anti-oppressive education is about teachers and students acknowledging the partiality of their own knowledge, the knowledge produced collectively (although understood in different ways), and embracing uncertainty (Ellsworth, 1997). Therefore, anti-oppressive education is about working through crisis and discomfort and recognizing moments of negotiation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance when teaching and learning toward social justice.

While anti-oppressive education requires looking inward, it also, "constantly turns its

lens outward to explore the insights made possible by perspectives on teaching and learning that have yet to be adequately addressed in the field of education" (Kumashiro, 2015, p. xxxviii). Consequently, teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways requires acknowledging, "the gaps between self and other, inside and outside, that dialogue supposedly bridges, smooths, alleviates, and ultimately crosses, are scenes troubled by cognitive uncertainty, forbidden thoughts, unreliable and unstable perceptions" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 42). This gap, identified by Ellsworth, is where the practice of anti-oppressive education agitates the partiality of our work, recognizes uncertainty, and works to develop what Antonio Gramsci (1971) called "good sense" while teaching and learning toward social justice. Therefore, anti-oppressive teaching and learning are not static positions that one can reach, but are reflections of the partial stories produced within the everyday contradictory context teachers and students are working in at any particular moment (Kumashiro, 2015).

This unresolved space that develops when teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways is what O'Shea (1993) defined as a, "gap between what we are supposed to be and what we have actually not become" (p. 504). This area of tension, "provides the space of individuation and agency – the resource which supports, not just brute resistance, but also conscious, intentional refusal" (O'Shea, 1993, p. 504). Indeed, teacher and student critical agency is a generative process that transpires in the classroom when students and teachers engage with anti-oppressive education. Working within this space of distress honors the necessary and untapped relational bond that inspires and brings forth the movement toward change (Adamian, 2015). In other words, anti-oppressive education reflects the love, hope, action, and change that teachers and students develop with and for each other while countering the injustices they experience.

In the pages ahead, a review of the literature in support of the practice of anti-oppressive education is summarized. Specifically, I looked to both critical pedagogy and yPAR as examples of anti-oppressive education in praxis. I start by highlighting the ways in which critical pedagogy honors the development of "good sense," by discussing the legacy and theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy, followed by several studies that share the practice of critical pedagogy in the classroom. I then look to empirical studies to illustrate the ways in which communities have engaged with youth participatory action research (yPAR) both in the U.S. and globally. Finally, I conclude with the ways in which a mutual engagement with critical pedagogy and yPAR generates radical healing spaces for students and teachers while teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways (Ginwright, 2010).

**Critical Pedagogy**

To a certain extent, the emergence of critical pedagogy was inspired by the early works of Frankfurt School theorists and philosophers who theorized the ways in which a capitalist system (although not connecting its functionality to race/racism) objectified culture and was a system worthy of analysis, critique, and transformation. Their theoretical work aimed at naming oppression and subordination in order to break free from the oppressive cultural inheritance shaped by a legacy of socio-political forces (see Adorno, 1969, 1973; Horkeimer, 1972; Marcuse, 1964, 1970). In other words, naming oppression meant to engage in a form of analysis that recognized the, "tensions in history, all of which become valuable in that they highlight the centrality of human agency and struggle while simultaneously revealing the gap between society as it presently exists and society as it might be" (Giroux, 2003, p. 51).

In relationship to schooling, this meant contesting a legacy of cultural hegemony that

shaped and reproduced oppression. To this end, the ideas of theorists and writers including, but not limited to, Boal (1982), Gramsci (1971), and Foucault (1972/1977), contributed toward the development of critical pedagogy by naming ideological systems of oppression, hegemony, and power and connected these forces with institutional structures. For example, Gramsci's (1971) discourse on ideological hegemony shared insight into the ways in which schooling played a crucial role in reproducing oppression. He posited that, "If every state tends to create and maintain a certain type of civilization and of citizen ... and to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others, then the law will be its instrument for this purpose (together with the school system, and other institutions and activities)" (Gramsci 1971, p. 246).

Drawing from the Frankfurt School theorists' development of critical pedagogy and Gramsci's theoretical contributions toward naming hegemony, critical pedagogy in education emerged from the work of Paulo Freire (1970; 1998). His insight into the banking method, oppression, critical consciousness, and praxis supported the later works of educational theorists, practitioners, and researchers. For example, critical pedagogues both theorized and practiced critical pedagogy (and acknowledged race/racism and other forms of oppression) that honored and continues to honor the possibilities toward freedom (racial and social justice) (see Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Giroux 2004; Grande, 2004; hooks, 2003; Kincheloe, 2010; Leonardo, 2009).

The theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy are rooted in action and reflection – praxis (Freire, 1970). More specifically, "As both an object of critique and a method of cultural production, it refuses to hide behind claims of objectivity, and works effortlessly to link theory and practice to enabling the possibilities for human agency in a world of

diminishing returns" (Giroux, 1996, p. 54). Therefore, critical pedagogy requires grappling with knowledge, power, and language with the intention of transforming the unjust status quo (Freire 1970,1998; Giroux & McLaren, 1992).

The development of critical pedagogy was, at its core, designed to counter schooling (oppressive), with education (liberatory). Education then, as the practice toward freedom, was the antithesis to schooling (Du Bois, 1903; Woodson, 1933; Freire, 1970). More specifically, the intention of critical pedagogy was to redefine the purpose of schooling with a liberatory form of education. In his Forward, Robert Shaull (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1984) posited that,

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

Subsequently, critical pedagogy acknowledges that teaching and learning in public schools is relational, wherein, "a projection of particular kinds of relations of self to self, and between self, others, and knowledge, and power" are consistently contested (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 25). Within this space of contestation and tension, the practice of critical pedagogy inspires teacher and student critical agency, and is cultivated within a long-term relationship with each other, with critical consciousness, and the hope for freedom (Freire, 1970). When the practice of critical pedagogy is situated within U.S. public school classrooms, spaces of distress transpire.

These spaces of distress occur due to the contradictory nature of critical pedagogy in the classroom. As discussed earlier, since its inception, the system of public schooling in the U.S. has been guided by a legacy of racist policies and practices (and continue to be today). Therefore, when teachers and students engage with critical pedagogy in the classroom, we participate in a struggle. A struggle with ourselves, with each other, for each other, and with the world, because, "critical pedagogy represents a form of cultural production implicated in and critically attentive to how power and meaning are employed in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values and identities" (Giroux, 1996, p. 52).

Therefore, spaces of distress transpire in the classroom during moments when there is a push and pull between – oppression and liberation; Eurocentric knowledge and indigenous knowledge; conformity and self-determination; dominant cultural narratives and grassroots cultural narratives; schooling and education; internalized oppression and critical consciousness; teacher's positionality and students' positionality; certainty and uncertainty (to name a few). In this sense, education is an act of love, and an act of courage. "It cannot fear the analysis of reality or, under pain of revealing itself a farce, avoid creative discussion" (Freire, 1974/2008, p. 33). Consequently, when students and teachers courageously and mindfully enter these spaces of distress that teaching and learning become an act of love and provide us the imagination to dream of something new (Kelley, 2002).

Indeed, research shows that while living in a hegemonic culture dependent on reproducing systems of oppression, the practice of critical pedagogy in the classroom has the potential to counteract the injustices students and teachers experience; and inspires the process toward personal and social transformation (see Camangian, 2011; Cammarota, 2011; Duncan–Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Peterson, 2003; Picower, 2012; Stovall, Calderon,

Carrera, & King, 2009; Stovall, 2013). When students and teachers engage with critical pedagogy in the classroom, they acknowledge that, "freedom must begin in the mind" and be felt in the heart (Kelley, 2002, p. 5). Hence, students and teachers develop the hope that brings forth the seeds of change. When students and teachers realize they have the power to change the story, they recognize that they are, "not merely inheritors of a culture but its makers" (Kelley, 2002, p. 2).

Today, by teaching and learning the state mandated standards in anti-oppressive ways, teachers and students intentionally use critical pedagogy in public school classrooms in order to disrupt oppressive practices (Camangian, 2010; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). What this means, is that by acknowledging that culture is a story that students and teachers co-create, we can then envision classroom communities beyond the culture of standardization and toward the practice of freedom. Thus, through action and reflection – praxis (Freire, 1970) students and teachers name the word and their world and take action in response to the injustices that attempt to strip them and their communities of their humanity (Freire, 1970).

Oppressive, dehumanizing schooling practices that attempt to strip and/or define students and teachers identities and normalize hegemony in the name of capitalism is an act of violence against youth (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire (1970) named this dehumanizing form of teaching as the "banking" system. Students are taught core subjects using rote memorization, and seen as empty vessels that need to be filled like depositories. Freire (1970) described this form of schooling in the following quote:

> The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role

> imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (p. 72)

On the other hand, the humanizing mode of education which Freire discussed, was rooted in the ways in which students (and teachers) practiced cultivating their own critical consciousness while engaging with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). In other words, the practice of critical pedagogy inspires critical consciousness through action and reflection, or praxis (Freire, 1970). Students and teachers name their world and take action in response to the injustices that attempt to strip them, their communities, and the world of our humanness. In doing so, students and teachers, "engage in authentic transformation of reality in order, by humanizing that reality, to humanize women and men" (Freire, 1970, p. 183). Indeed, "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming" (Freire, 1970, p. 88). Hence, living in a hegemonic culture dependent on reproducing systems of oppression, the practice of critical pedagogy honors personal and social transformation.

Shawn Ginwright (2010), co-founder of Leadership Excellence a youth development organization in Oakland, CA, has been working with black youth for over twenty years. His notion of radical healing draws from Freire's discourse rooted in critical consciousness. Ginwright posited that he used, "the term [critical consciousness] to convey how an awareness of the systematic forms of oppression builds the capacity for self-determination to take action to address social and community problems" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 17). For example, when young people involved in Leadership Excellence (LE) work to transform their environment, they experience radial healing. Ginwright explained that radical healing as a, "process [that] contributes to individual well being, community health, and broader social

justice, whereby young people can act on the behalf of others with hope, joy and a sense of possibility" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 8). Through action and reflection, young people take action in response to the injustices that they recognize. By problematizing their situatedness, youth work toward creating humanizing spaces while simultaneously reflecting on systems of oppression and their own biases, assumptions, actions and/or practices. Mikayla an active participant in Leadership Excellence shared that,

> They made me think of political stuff that I wouldn't have thought of if I wasn't in the program. They made me aware that I can make a change and act and not just accept things the way they are. It's kinda like…I'm in a family…(As cited in Ginwright, 2010, pp. 59-60).

In a similar way, a study conducted by Camangian (2013), shared the ways in which a humanizing pedagogy supported, "young people to explore the depths of their 'unresolved historical grief' while helping to cultivate a deeper knowledge of and compassion for self, mobilizing efforts to develop a deeper sense of control over their collective lives" (2013, p. 3). Camangian drew from extensive data that he collected (100 field note entries, over 100 hours of audio and 50 hours of video recording of classroom instruction, activities, and dialogue) while working alongside high school students and shared the stories of two students that expressed the ways in which critical pedagogy in the classroom evoked them to activate their own critical consciousness and experience a humanizing mode of education. One of the students he worked with shared how he experienced the process stating, "I think you was like, [messing] with our ideas. You [messed] with mine, I could tell you (Laughs)" (Leon, as cited in Camangian, 2013, p. 11). Leon goes on the share:

> I wanna say . . . at first . . . it didn't make me want to change myself, it made me want

> to question myself. And then as the class went along, it made me really want to change some of the things I did (Leon, as cited in Camangian, 2013, p. 11).

Camangian concluded that the crucial components of, "the humanizing pedagogical process [were] agitating, arousing, and inspiring" (2013, p. 7).

Additionally, a study (Adamian, 2015) conducted in a seventh grade life science classroom provided another exemplar of the ways in which critical pedagogy in the classroom inspired critical consciousness. Julio, shared that:

> This experience was pretty emotional for me because I've never been talked about like this. I've only been talked about like this with my family. I have never seen a teacher actually go out and actually talk to a kid about school and the class and how we feel about the system. It brings up sadness and happiness… First I was sad because when we talked about like the system and how I used to think that white people were better and now I am happy because I know that only my thinking had got the better of me. I feel better now and I know I'm just as smart. (As cited in Adamian, 2015, p. 66)

Mikayla's, Leon's, and Julio's testimonies are examples of how the practice of critical pedagogy honors students' lived experiences, identities, and knowledge. As Camangian (2013) points out, "Humanizing education is complex because it tries to move, in beautifully contested ways, children and communities to where they want to go while grappling with the painful pasts that they have to confront to get there" (p. 3) Through action and reflection, students and teachers consistently agitate dehumanizing social constructs that have been normalized, value their own and others' identities, and work toward dismantling oppressive practices in their classroom, school, and/or community.

Mikayla, Leon and Julio shared how their development of their own critical consciousness supported them toward personal transformation. Their narratives above reflect how the attack on public schools requires that teachers and students work together and consistently seek ways to problematize the rigid and unjust practices imposed and sustained through sanctions and incentives based on standardized test scores (Fuller, 2003; Picower, 2012; Sleeter, 2005; Kumashiro, 2012). Teachers and students have a right to teach and learn in spaces that foster their full development academically, socially, and emotionally (UDHR, 1948, p. 1).

Living in a hegemonic culture dependent on reproducing systems of oppression (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, age), opens up a much-needed space for the practice of critical pedagogy as a means towards both personal and social transformation. In this sense, students and teachers critically reflect on the dominant culture's discourse and practices and work toward dismantling dehumanizing narratives, policies, and practices. In turn, the dominant stories in the classroom shift toward anti-oppressive practices that honor students' and teachers' identities, lived experiences, and knowledge. Indeed, critical pedagogy carves out a space for a humanizing mode of education to transpire. In doing so, students engage in the immediate analysis of their own lived experience, acknowledge their agency, and work toward transforming their own lives, while simultaneously working toward social justice. Similar to critical pedagogy, youth participatory action research is another exemplar of anti-oppressive education in that it involves an intentional process toward personal and social transformation rooted in action and reflection, or praxis (Freire, 1970).

**Youth Participatory Action Research**

In the past decade, a number of studies have documented how young people have

participated in humanizing summer programs, after school programs, youth organizations, and classroom electives while engaging with the methodological process of youth participatory action research (yPAR) (see Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Clay, 2012; Ginwright, & James, 2002; Ginwright, 2010; Mirra & Morrell, 2011). Exploring the legacy and practice of participatory action research (PAR) provides meaningful insight into the development of yPAR. PAR is a process closely aligned with and draws from, Freire's concepts of critical consciousness, self-determination, and praxis. It is "a research methodology that combines theory, action and participation committed to further the interests of exploited groups…it challenges established academic routines without discarding the need to accumulate and systematise knowledge, and to construct a more comprehensive and human paradigm" (Borda, 1987). Therefore, PAR is a collective process that is action-oriented and driven by the local knowledge of the oppressed who are committed to transforming the unjust conditions of their lives and the lives of those they love.

PAR is a methodological process that supports local communities toward interrogating their local contexts in that, "self-investigation by underprivileged people naturally generates action by them (and inaction if they so choose) to advance their own lives, so that *action unites, organically, with research*" (Rahman, 2007, p. 49, emphasis added). Some of the earliest documented PAR studies involved movements which began in the global south during the early 1970's. Embraced by grassroots communities seeking self-determination, PAR studies emerged in many countries including, but not limited to, Nicaragua, Columbia, Mexico, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Chile, and India (see Fals Borda, 1982; Rahman, 2003; Salazar, 1988). For example, grassroots organizing by the Bhoomi Sena in India emerged when locals in the Palghar Taluk district of Maharastra began

fighting for self-determination (experiencing dispossession of land and the impacts of capitalism) (De Silva, & Niranjan, 1979; Rahman, 2003). The Bhoomi Sena is part of a large grassroots movement fighting for social and economic rights. Their movement developed from decades of collective struggle. As their movement progressed, they began engaging with PAR to support, "raising people's awareness,'(coinciding with Paulo Freire's notion of *conscientization*), through collective self-reflection and analysis" (Rahman, 2003, p. 52). They rejected (and continue to) any outside external support aside from academics that honored the principles and objectives of PAR (collective research, critical recovery of history, valuing and applying folk culture, production and diffusion of new knowledge) (Fals-Borda, 1988).

External support from academics is a common theme among the PAR movements that have been documented (see Almas, 1988; Bhasin, 1978; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fernandes, 1985; Fuglesang, 1986; Hirschman, 1984; Tilakaratna, 1985). Fals-Borda (1988) insisted that this external support from scholars must never occur in a top-down approach. What he was implying was supported by Rahman (2008), who posited that external academics needed to work alongside community members, "promoting people's praxis – action – reflection rhythm – and never dictating people's action" (Rahman, 2008, p. 52). In order for scholar-activists to engage with local communities, it was crucial that they honored the indigenous knowledge of the communities they worked with and required a "subject-subject" relationship (Fals-Borda, 1988, p. 31).

Many of the local communities that engaged with PAR (see Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Rahman, 2003) agreed only to work with outside academics that acknowledged and practiced the sentiments that Fals-Borda (1995) shared during a plenary address in Atlanta,

Georgia where he spoke to external supporters (academics) stating:

> Do not monopolize your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers; that is, fill in the distance between subject and object; Do not trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interests, but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them; Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organizations. (para. 9)

In part, Fals-Borda and Rahman's work alongside grassroots communities inspired PAR studies to emerge in the global south and later in the U.S. As PAR studies and critical youth studies (Akom, 2008) began to increase in the U.S., several scholars in the field of education recognized the need to center young people in the PAR process as a way for young people to analyze their immediate reality and activate their own sense of agency (see Akom, Cammarota & Ginwright, 2008; Cammarota & Fine 2008; Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2010; Clay, 2012; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Nygreen, 2013; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009; Yang, 2009).

Inspired by the legacy of PAR, the development of youth participatory action research (yPAR), shares similar theoretical and philosophical perspectives with PAR. However, yPAR is a methodological process that intentionally centers the collective participation of youth and their knowledge as the driving force toward collective action and self-determination (Cammarota, 2011). For example, yPAR "initiates transformative processes that not only improve school conditions but also produce empowered youth

subjectivities and agencies" (Cammarota, 2008, p. 49).

The youth programs discussed in this review demonstrate the ways in which young people experienced personal and social/community transformation while, "integrating issues of power, history, self-identity, and collective agency, [wherein] healing rebuilds hope and political possibilities for young people" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 37). In order for these possibilities to come alive, youth participated in "strategizing, researching, and organizing in order to change school policies, state legislation, and police protocols that create problems in their daily lives" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 37). For example, the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in Arizona introduced yPAR to high school students in order, "to help students enhance their level of critical consciousness through a curriculum that meets state standards and affords them the opportunity to develop sophisticated critical analyses of their own social contexts" (Cammarota & Romero, 2009, p. 489). Consequently, students in SJEP engaged with yPAR in order to transform their own lives and the inequities they recognized.

The yPAR process that students engaged with was aligned with Paris and Winn's (2014) description of the process, wherein, co-researchers participated by, "identifying problems; designing the study and instruments; collecting, analyzing, and presenting data; and carrying out action" (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. 65). For example, students documented through video recordings, the ways in which the main campus with a newly built law magnet school (which together made up the entire school), had segregated students and was underserving students of color. Students collected data showing that the law magnet school was mostly comprised of white middle-class students, whereas the main campus was attended mostly by Mexican American students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Cammarota, 2008). Students also recorded the deteriorating facilities of the main campus,

and compared it to the law magnet school's facilities and educational opportunities. They created and shared their video documentary to an audience of teachers and administrators and showed the new computers and advanced placement classes that the law magnet school provided, and the dangerous machinery in the special education classroom that was located on the main campus. As a result, although not all of the problems that the students presented were addressed, the heavy machinery was removed from the special education classroom (Cammarota, 2008). Beyond the physical changes that occurred on their campus, the students' engagement with yPAR also supported them in developing their own critical consciousness, acknowledge their agency, and develop new knowledge that was disseminated to their campus community (Cammarota, 2008).

Many yPAR studies share the ways in which external supporters (e.g. teachers, scholars, and/or grassroots organization staff) supported young people's knowledge and critical youth agency, while simultaneously attempting to honor youth as both co-researchers and change agents (see Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Cammarota & Romero, 2010; Clay, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright, 2010; Ginwright, & James, 2002; Guishard & Tuck, 2014; Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Nygreen, 2013). For example, Youth as Public Intellectuals (YPI), a program developed in collaboration between San Francisco State University (SFSU) and Berkeley Unified School District in 2005, employed yPAR in the classroom as a way to, "begin to conceptualize and theorize the often invisible or barely audible dreams that young people have about how to transform our society, gain greater political and economic power and independence" (Akom, et al., 2008, p. 112). This collaboration involved, Antwi Akom, a professor at SFSU who taught an elective course (public education and video production),

wherein high school students from Berkeley Unified School District chose several topics that impacted their lives. The problems they chose to investigate included, "environmental racism, gentrification, green technology, education, development, and gang/gun violence" (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008, p. 35). The students presented their findings in a variety of mediums including media outlets such as film festivals and radio broadcasts, both locally and nationally. Students were also involved in a range of actions including the production of youth commentaries, bloc-u-mentaries, poetry, and blogs (Akom, et al., 2008).

Young people involved in programs rooted in the yPAR process, such as SJEP and YPI, have taken action toward transforming their own lives and the unjust conditions of their schools and/or communities. A large number of yPAR studies have been undertaken. Below, I provide a brief glimpse into some of the ways in which they have taken action toward social justice. Although my brief examples do not do justice to the work that young people participated in alongside their external supporter(s); they provide examples of a wide range of yPAR initiatives that have or continue to be taking place.

Additionally, a study (2014) by Langhout, Collins, & Ellison, took place in a rural community where the public schools are underserved and under resourced (Langhout, Collins, & Ellison, 2014). This study investigated twelve young people who were enrolled in a yPAR after school program at an elementary school. Majority of the students were Latin@s in 4$^{th}$ or 5$^{th}$ grade and were enrolled in the yPAR class for 2 years. Both a teacher and two university-based researchers supported the students in engaging with the methodological process of yPAR. The study shares that as students began to investigate their school site, they identified that their school was unwelcoming. Consequently, the students decided to create murals on their campus in order to provide a more welcoming space for students and

community members (Langhout, Collins, & Ellison, 2014).

In addition to the studies mentioned above, young people across the U.S. have participated in improving their own lives and their communities. For example, a study (2008) conducted by Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson, & Tuck, shared the ways in which young researchers in the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire (CREDD) coalition generated awareness within their community about the large number of students taking the General Educational Development test (GED) and its exploitation used as a covert mechanism for pushing out students in New York City schools (Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson, & Tuck, 2008). Collectively, the yPAR studies reviewed in this section occurred in different contexts, locations, conditions, and for different reasons. At the same time, each study shared several crucial components of yPAR including: the honoring and centering of young people's knowledge, agency, and self-determination. Finally, all of the yPAR studies were exemplars of praxis, community building, and transformation.

In conclusion, the yPAR studies reviewed in this section, shared the ways in which adult supporters developed spaces alongside young people that nurtured hope, passion, and purpose. With a critical lens, young people participated in the work toward dismantling the unjust conditions of their lives through the methodological process of yPAR. In this sense, youth participated in counter-hegemonic practices while participating in programs that acknowledged, "students' own cultures and experiences could be drawn upon to construct highly valued knowledge" (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2001, p. 118).

**Building a Beloved Community: Radical Healing Spaces**

In this final section, I begin by reviewing the legacy and advancement of beloved

communities that were rooted in love, hope, imagination, and personal and/or social transformation. Josiah Royce (1913) advanced the idea of building a beloved community stating, "I believe in the beloved community and in the spirit which makes it beloved…I see no such community as yet; but none the less my rule of life is: Act so as to hasten its coming" (p. 358). Royce (1913) imagined the emergence of a beloved community as a relational process where those involved acknowledged its unfinishedness, while simultaneously acting on its creation. In this sense, "even though that commitment was first made in the mind and heart, it is realized by concrete action, by anti-racist living and being" (hooks, 1995, p. 264). Consequently, the dream of a beloved community is realized when communities and/or classroom communities work in praxis toward social justice and confront the oppressive systems and practices that exist today.

In the classroom, working toward building a beloved community supports working in anti-oppressive ways while teaching and learning toward social justice. Several humanizing practices that support the notion of building a beloved community in the classroom include imagination (Kelley, 2002), critical hope (Freire, 1992; Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and radical healing (Ginwright, 2010). Therefore, I will look to both theoretical and empirical research studies that examined the ways in which imagination, hope, and healing ignited the possibilities toward envisioning, "the most revolutionary ideas available to us…freedom and love" (Kelley, 2002, p. 11).

Developing love of self, and in turn, loving others even more, are essential conditions toward transforming systems of oppression, while simultaneously imagining and acting on building a beloved community. Individuals, who dream of building a beloved community alongside others consciously and in service to their community, recognize that such action

reflects what, "the beloved community embodies, for its lover, values which no human individual, viewed as a detached being, could even remotely approach. And in a corresponding way, the love which inspires the loyal soul has been transformed" (Royce, 1913, p. 173). In essence, "the small circles of love that we have managed to form in our individual lives represent a concrete realistic reminder that beloved community is not a dream, that it already exists for those of us who have done the work" (hooks, 1995, p. 264). As beloved communities emerge in different spaces, the dream for a global transformation rooted in hope, love and freedom is imagined (Kelley, 2002; Royce, 1913).

Martin Luther King Jr. expanded on Royce's vision of a beloved community. In 1956, King spoke about the beloved community being the final triumph of nonviolent boycotts. Following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in regards to desegregating the seats on Montgomery's busses, King (1956) stated in his speech that,

> We must remember as we boycott that a boycott is not an end within itself; it is merely a means to awaken a sense of shame within the oppressor and challenge his false sense of superiority. The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends…It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men. (p. 458)

The love that Royce and King embraced was *agape*. In other words, agape, " is love in action. *Agape* is love seeking to preserve and create community... In the final analysis, agape means a recognition of the fact that all life is interrelated. All humanity is involved in a single process" (King, 1958, p. 20). King, (in part inspired by Gandhi and a student of Royce) expressed that, "*Agape* does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy

people…It begins by loving others *for their sakes*" and "makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both" (King, 1958, p. 20). Hence, agape compels the oppressed to love themselves and each other, and also requires the oppressor to learn to love the oppressed. Indeed, agape is a humanizing love that works to dismantle oppressive systems, by transforming hearts and minds. Subsequently, acknowledging that, "the kinship of the oppressor group is not one based on love. Rather, it is based on the surveillance of one another to uphold group norms and status interests" makes the building of a beloved community rooted in agape, a fundamental aspect necessary for transformation (Matias & Allen, 2013, p. 292). Agape is love that transcends individual needs and suffering and embraces healing in community with others with the vision of a beloved community (King, 1957).

According to King (1958), the kind of love you had for the oppressor was not a sentimental type of love, but agape. This meant that the movement/resistance was directed toward the systems of oppression (vertical) not the individuals that acted on behalf of oppressive systems (horizontal) (Freire, 1970). He stressed that "the tension is between justice and injustice, between forces of light and forces of darkness" (King, 1958, p. 18). Indeed, the work toward liberation entails moving beyond the culture of casting blame horizontally, and intentionally building relationships that work to dismantle vertical systems of oppression (militarism, institutional racism, capitalism). During the eleventh annual Women of Color conference, hooks (2008) reasoned that:

> We want to divide the world into this binary of good and bad guys, so that when we do that we actually keep dominator culture in place. For one aspect of that culture is the projection outward onto an enemy whenever things go wrong. Casting blame is a

> crucial component of dominator thinking. It helps promote a culture of victimization. When we are more energized by the practice of blaming than we are by efforts to create transformation, we not only cannot find relief from suffering, we are creating the conditions that help keep us stuck in the status quo.

The legacy of Royce, King, and countless grassroots movements (see Kelley, 2002; Rahman, 2003), including the theoretical work by Kelley (2002), hooks (1995), and Duncan-Andrade (2009) and an empirical study by Ginwright (2010) reflect the intersections of love, hope, and imagination that support building a beloved community in the classroom. Their work acknowledged the principles of building a beloved community and reflected the hope and possibilities toward freedom. As Kelley (2002) points out:

> Too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change (p. vii).

Therefore, realizing how students and teachers love, hope, heal, and imagine together, moves classroom communities beyond the culture of satisfying a means to an end (perpetuates dominator thinking and market-reform tactics), and honors the *process* toward personal and social transformation. In other words, "we must tap into our own collective imaginations, that we do what earlier generations did: dream" because, "making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us" (Kelley, 2002, p. xii). Thus, the notion of building a beloved community in the classroom affirms the *process*

of teaching and learning toward social justice and humanizes the relationships between students, and students and teacher.

Ginwright (2010) was inspired by the notion of building a beloved community which led him to develop what he called "radical healing." He posited that radical healing constituted, "building the capacity of young people to act upon their environment in ways that contribute to the common good. This process contributes to individual wellbeing, community health, and broader social justice, whereby young people can act on the behalf of others with hope, joy and a sense of possibility" (p. 8). Consequently, when young people of color engage in the process of building a beloved community, their counteractions with their everyday oppressive conditions generates spaces for radical healing and, "points to the process of building hope, optimism, and vision to create justice in the midst of oppression" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 9). Hence, it is envisioning freedom that, "transports us to another place, compel us to relive the horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society" (Kelley, 2002, p. 9). This hope that moves teachers and students toward building a beloved community, is what Duncan-Andrade called, "critical hope." Duncan-Andrade (2009) asserted that critical hope requires us (teachers),

> to recognize that our damaged petals, and those of our students, are not what need to be reformed out of us; they are what need to be celebrated about us. Each time we convey this—the true value of the painful path—we are building critical hope in the person next to us who wonders if they, too, can make it through the crack (p. 192).

With collective hope we work on, "addressing our individual and collective suffering… find ways to heal and recover that can be sustained, that can endure from generation to generation" (hooks, 1995 p. 145). Thus, one aspect of radical healing is the development of

community (Ginwright, 2010). For example, "radical healing occurs in community where the space to imagine and hope encourage young people to shed their fear and pain in order to move forward with love and optimism" (p. 10). Therefore, radical healing is part of the movement, and part of the process toward liberation.

Ginwright's concept of radical healing reflected what Kelley (2002) recognized was inherent in past social movements. Kelley acknowledged that, "it was about self-transformation, changing the way we think, live, love, and handle pain" (p. 11). In essence, radical healing was (and continues to be) a process experienced by those involved in building a beloved community. In this sense, "healing is a dance between the individual and the community" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 77).

Both Ginwright and Kelley were partly inspired by hooks (1995), who envisioned building a beloved community. hooks reasoned that, "To live in anti-racist society we must collectively renew our commitment to a democratic vision of radical justice and equality. Pursuing that vision we create a culture where *beloved community* flourishes and is sustained" (p. 271). To this end, looking to empirical studies that embraced the principles of building a beloved community contribute, "through testimony, dialogue, and witnessing, [so that] we can understand an affirming love for humanity and justice" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 79). Below, I discuss, a study conducted by Ginwright (2010) who explored the ways in which black youth build community with each other and concluded that community building is a crucial component for radical healing to occur.

Ginwright (2010) conducted an ethnographic study where he explored black youths' personal transformation while they simultaneously engaged in the practice toward social transformation collectively. More specifically, he examined "how trust, relationship building,

and political consciousness form the basis for profound community where healing occurs" (p. 80). The youth's experiences that were shared in his study were members of the Leadership Excellence (LE) program located in Oakland, CA. Ginwright (2010), a founding member of LE, identified three underlying principles that the organization practiced with youth, stating that LE:

1) provides support from traumatic personal events and neighborhood violence,
2) cultivates political identities among black youth by resurrecting a healthy racial and ethnic identity, and
3) provides the tools and knowledge for youth to engage in ongoing personal growth needed for community change. (p. 23)

When practiced in community with others, the three practices listed above honor Ginwright's notion and contribution in relationship to radical healing. Ginwright asserts that, radical healing is a process that emphasizes, "the socially toxic conditions in urban communities; the process for building the capacity for youth to respond to these conditions; and the ways in which social justice, agency, and resistance can contribute to individual, community, and broader social wellness" (p. 24).

Through youth and adult staff testimonies, Ginwright captured the ways in which youth cultivated their own critical consciousness, experienced personal self-transformation, and embraced possibility and their agency. For example, Mikayla voiced that her participation in LE's political education program inspired her to think differently about herself and her actions. She stated that:

> It gave me a whole new way of thinking about stuff. There were no limits placed on who you are, where you are going, or what you want to do. So many things came out

> of that conversation because there were no limits placed on what we could imagine! (As cited in Ginwright, 2010, p. 62)

Mikayla's response reflected the ways in which educational researchers and/ or theorists discussed what the process of building a beloved community entailed (Ginwright, 2010; hooks, 1995; Kelley, 2002). For example, she embraced possibility, hope, and imagination, which reflected the process of radical healing. Additionally, she highlighted what healing looked like, by acknowledging her self-worth, potential, and agency toward contributing in ways that before seemed unimaginable. In this sense, Mikayla embodied what those working to build beloved communities imagine. Mikayla's response honored LE's process that worked to foster, "rebuilding collective identities (racial, gendered, youth), exposing youth to critical thinking about social conditions, and building activism, [wherein] black youth heal by removing self-blame and act to confront pressing school and community problems" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 12). In doing so, LE focused in part, on working with black youth in ways that inspired the development of their own critical consciousness. The youth grappled with their lived experiences and acknowledged the ways in which oppression impacted their lives. For example, they confronted institutional racism, horizontal and vertical violence, and recognized that they had the agency to transform the injustices that impacted their lives and their community (Ginwright, 2010). In essence, youth named their world, and in turn, worked toward the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970). As Terell, reflected on his experiences as a member of LE, he pointed out that,

> It's almost like a consciousness training ground…not in the military sense, but like a boot camp in the sense that you come form the community and you come from all these messed-up-type of conditions. You come to this camp where you leave that

> situation to be able to look back at it and then see if you want to change it or how to change it. (As cited in Ginwright, 2010, p. 96)

The camp that Terell mentioned was called Camp Akili and was a 5-day summer camp that LE members attended. In addition to LE's community space in Oakland, Camp Akili was a trip that brought youth together in order to grapple with multiple forms of oppression in order to heal and confront personal and social injustices. They shared their lived experiences, built trust, solidarity, and hope, toward improving their lives and their community, while simultaneously creating a healing space (Ginwright, 2010). Ginwright's ethnographic study shared extensively the ways in which youth (with support from LE staff) developed trusting relationships, healing spaces, and self-worth.

Ginwright's findings showed that youth embraced their agency, began to heal, and demanded institutional and social change. To this end, radical healing evoked hope and inspired the possibilities for young people to dream of something new (Kelley, 2002). The hope that was embraced by youth was what Duncan-Andrade (2009) called audacious hope.

> Audacious hope stares down the painful path; and despite the overwhelming odds against us making it down that path to change, we make the journey again and again. There is no other choice. Acceptance of this fact allows us to find the courage and the commitment to cajole our students to join us on that journey. This makes us better people as it makes us better teachers, and it models for our students that the painful path *is* the hopeful path. (p. 10)

The development of hope in the face of injustice is a revolutionary act. Hope is the antithesis to hopelessness in that, "hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism" (Freire, 1992, p. 3). Paradoxically, the hope for justice resides in a

space of "rage and love, without which there is no hope" (Freire, 1992, p. 4). Hope then, and more accurately, critical hope, lives in-between acknowledging systems of oppression, dehumanization, and suffering and envisioning freedom, humanization, and love. Indeed, critical hope, "as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness" (Freire, 1992, p. 2). Therefore, in practice, audacious hope, which Duncan-Andrade points out is an aspect of critical hope, "demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victories *and* the pain. This notion of solidarity is the essential ingredient for 'radical healing' (Ginwright, 2009)" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 9).

In conclusion, building a beloved community in the classroom requires a humanizing pedagogy rooted in love (King, 1957; hooks, 1995), imagination (Kelley, 2002), critical hope (Freire, 1992; Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and radical healing (Ginwright, 2010). The underlying essence between these ways of being and acting is that they all reflect process, uncertainty, vulnerability, and unfinishedness. Therefore, the acts in and of themselves when embraced by communities – resist and counter oppression and neoliberal policies and practices. In this sense, honoring the process of building a beloved community pushes back on neoliberal discourse and policies that attempt to dehumanize education in order to reproduce systems of oppression for the economic gain by the elite.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed literature that attended to justice-centered theories and practices which provided meaningful insight into the ways in which to create and sustain humanizing classroom and community spaces that honor students, teachers and local communities. Building from this collective knowledge, this study attended to contributing

toward filling the gaps as it related to anti-oppressive education, by troubling and problematizing: 1) the student and teacher binary, 2) justice-centered education in a science classroom, and 3) PAR/yPAR. Below, I share the ways in which this study turned a critical lens toward each of these spaces of distress and sought to contribute new insight and new possibilities for students and teachers working toward social justice.

**Student and teacher binary.** Reflecting on both the theoretical and empirical studies reviewed in this chapter, whether the literature was generated from a position towards social justice or from a neoliberal stance, both bodies of educational research had the habit of severing the relationship between students and teachers. In other words, the discourse was either about how teachers teach and act or about how students learn and act. Yet, the story of the relationship between the two in regards to inspiring agency and the practice toward freedom was rarely shared. It is within this space of discomfort and tension that this study intends to problematize while simultaneously carving out a space for reframing what it means to be a student or teacher. Indeed, by developing new frames and sites of resistance rooted in the *process* of co-creating liberating spaces by students and teachers that educational discourse can transcend the deficit perspective that blames students and teachers for the pitfalls of a U.S. capitalism system.

**Humanizing pedagogy in a science classroom.** Historically, the field of science affirmed and often perpetuated oppressive, hegemonic, and dehumanizing practices that often marginalized people of color, women, the LGBT community, and the working class and continues to do so today. Therefore, expanding the possibilities for liberatory education in a content area such as science is needed because the scholarship in science education oftentimes does not include students' and teachers' development of their own critical

consciousness, engagement with critical pedagogy and/or PAR/yPAR in a k-12 science classroom. This study worked to fill that gap by specifically looking at and problematizing the ways in which critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, and working toward a beloved community while engaged in PAR/tsPAR were a possibility in this age of standardization and the constraints brought about by high-stakes testing and top-down management.

**Troubling PAR and yPAR.** Of the documented PAR and yPAR studies reviewed in this chapter, a mutual engagement between local communities and external supporters (e.g. sociologists, teachers, adult staff, theorists, and/or educational researchers) occurred. PAR and yPAR are methodological processes that honor the lived experiences and indigenous knowledge of oppressed groups that are working toward justice. At the same time PAR/yPAR involves external supporter(s) that recognize what Rahman and Fals-Borda acknowledged (upon reflection) after many years of participating in the PAR process. Rahman and Fals-Borda (1991) discussed that they began,

> to understand PAR not merely as a methodology of research with the subject/subject relationship evolving in symmetrical, horizontal or non-exploitative patterns in social, economic and political life. We saw it also as a part of social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promote people's (collective) praxis. Of course, this also turned out to be that of the activists (PAR researchers) at the same time, since the life of everybody is formally or informally some kind of praxis. But the promotion of people's collectives and their systematic praxis became, and has continued to be, a primary objective of PAR. (pp. 25-26)

However, the PAR and yPAR studies reviewed in this chapter do not share the ways in which

the researchers (external supporters) themselves experienced "formally or informally some kind of praxis" alongside the local communities they worked with (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 25). In addition, a crucial objective or PAR is, "the promotion of people's collectives and their systematic praxis" which were missing from PAR/yPAR studies reviewed in this chapter (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 25). Consequently, the studies situated the external supporters as static experts, and did not discuss the ways in which the external supporter(s) themselves engaged, experienced, transformed, and worked alongside the groups that they were working alongside during the PAR/yPAR process.

Recognizing that honoring and centering the work of grassroots/local communities is indeed a crucial component of PAR/yPAR. At the same time, omitting the external supporter(s) from the process discounts the ways in which mutual engagement from multiple spaces (teachers, students, grassroots/local communities, educational researchers, etc.) is occurring (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015). This mutual engagement between the "subject-subject," which is intended to inspire a shared commitment toward personal and social transformation is a relational space worthy of exploring. In other words, PAR/yPAR studies involve local communities and external supporters, and oftentimes, their mutual engagement is absent from the study/process. Therefore, by employing CRP-Ed during the research process, supports naming the tensions (contradictions, power dynamics) during the relational/methodological process, and troubles the ways in which external supporters engage with and document PAR/yPAR studies.

More specifically, when external supporter(s) work alongside grassroots/local communities, spaces of distress (as discussed earlier) transpire. Spaces of distress arise due to the contradictory context that we work in and against. How we build relationships with

each other and work through and with the power dynamics that inevitably exist, is an important story to share. Omitting the tensions, uncertainty, contradictions, and vulnerably of the relational process of PAR/yPAR which occur while pushing back on hegemonic structures, results in unresolved spaces and missed opportunities. In other words, by not naming the spaces of distress that participants work in or through, stifles the development of the subject-subject relationships while engaging with a methodological process that can often be antagonistic, yet named otherwise (e.g. co-researchers/subject-subject). Understanding how we build relationships, redefine ourselves, and work toward self-determination in spaces where we negotiate, perpetuate, transform, and/or dismantle power dynamics while working together toward racial and/or social justice is what Freire (1976) named, "the practice of freedom."

Participating within a collective requires working from a critically humble space. It means acknowledging that "a projection of particular kinds of relations of self to self, and between self, others, and knowledge, and power" will be consistently contested (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 25). For example, by sharing the ways in which grassroots efforts involve teachers and students, or educational researchers and grassroots communities can provide meaningful insight into how these unions navigate, perpetuate and/or work in contradictory ways (while simultaneously being mindful of not leaving the spaces of tension and/or discomfort). To this end, naming the contradictions, and recognizing the tensions that anti-oppressive work generates, is an act of love. It is an act of love because if there is tension, or contradiction, it means that there is an engagement with the push and pull between oppression and liberation. When this space is abandoned or not acknowledged, is when the space resides on the side of the oppressor (Freire, 1970).

Ultimately, entering spaces of distress with intention and strategizing ways to name and work through and in the tensions is necessary. Yamamoto's (1997) contribution on critical race praxis provides meaningful insight into the ways in which entering spaces of distress requires a mutual engagement between people and/or groups from differing positionalities and contexts. His work informed U.S. legal conversations and practices by centering race and racism and linking theory with practice as a collective in order to dismantle oppressive policies and practices. Yamamoto (1997) asserted that, "Critical race praxis combines critical, pragmatic, socio-legal analysis with political lawyering and community organizing to practice justice by and for racialized communities" (p. 829). When applied in the space of educational research and more specifically to PAR/yPAR, the aim of critical race praxis then works "to build solidarity among groups that work in different spaces, capacities, and positionalities with a shared commitment toward racial justice" (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015, p. 34).

Therefore, drawing from critical race praxis (see Yamamoto, 1997) and extending critical race praxis to include educational researchers (see Jayakumar and Adamian, 2015) requires strategic maneuvering that consistently strives to acknowledge and grapple with the tensions that exist within the hegemonic spaces that anti-oppressive work seeks to inform. Troubling the ways in which educational scholars approach research, means engaging with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice, while honoring the knowledge and voices of local communities and simultaneously naming the spaces of distress that we work in and through together (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015).

# Chapter III: RESEARCH DESIGN

## Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which our seventh grade science classroom community engaged with humanizing pedagogy towards the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of students and teacher. During this process and through the use of teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR) we aimed to contribute toward the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognized within our classroom, school and/or community. I begin this chapter by sharing the research questions that responded to the proposed problem. Next, I summarize the guiding tenets of Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed). I then discuss the process of tsPAR, a methodology developed within this chapter. More specifically, I discuss how tsPAR is inspired by and builds on traditional PAR/yPAR methodology. Finally, I end this section with an introduction to the principles of tsPAR and describe how the tenets of CRP-Ed guide the tsPAR methodology advanced in this chapter.

## Research Questions

This study attended to the overarching question: In what ways can our classroom community engage with humanizing pedagogy and research towards the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of students and teacher and the building of a beloved community?

1. To what extent can our classroom community's engagement with tsPAR and CRP-Ed contribute toward naming the spaces of distress and defining for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we are?

2. To what extent can our classroom community honor the principles of tsPAR and the tenets of CRP-Ed while simultaneously negotiating with and pushing back on state and federally mandated science standards?

## Design of Investigation and Methodology

For the purpose of this study, Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed) (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015) and teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR) (Adamian, 2015) were employed. Both CRP-Ed and tsPAR troubled how the research process was approached, by acknowledging that, "a projection of particular kinds of relations of self to self, and between self, others, and knowledge, and power" would be contested (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 25). Below, I describe the tenets of CRP-Ed, followed by the principles of tsPAR that structured and guided the underlying assumptions of this study, while simultaneously troubling the process of PAR/yPAR.

### Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research

CRP-Ed consists of four guiding tenets, three of which supported the methodological process of tsPAR and also aligned with the theoretical framework of this study. The tenets of CRP-Ed are, "driven by hope and possibilities, while acknowledging the difficult task of inspiring mutual engagement across different positionalities (e.g., political lawyers, institutional practitioners, educational researchers, grassroots activists) and intersectionalities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality)" (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015, p. 36). The three guiding tenets of CRP-Ed that were utilized for the purposes of this study included: 1) Relational advocacy toward mutual engagement, 2) Redefining dominant and hegemonic systems, and 3) Research as a dialectical space (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015). Below, I provide a summary of each tenet. Additionally, later in this chapter, I provide the ways in which the

three tenets of CRP-Ed align with critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, and beloved communities, which comprised the theoretical framework for this study.

*Tenet 1. Relational advocacy toward mutual engagement* turns a critical lens onto the ways in which collaborations across different positionalities are navigated while working toward building anti-hegemonic relationships. Paradoxically, relational advocacy is situated within a U.S. capitalism system that normalizes heteronormative-white male supremacy. Thus, while working within the constraints of institutions that reproduce systems of oppression, collectively (e.g. teachers, students, educational researchers, local communities, grassroots organizations) working toward dismantling oppressive policies and practices requires a mutual engagement with a critical consciousness. When naming systems of oppression, a multilayered approach that acknowledges moments of discomfort, while simultaneously recognizing moments of negotiation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance challenges the dominant narrative across different spheres of influence.

It is within this context, that recognizing how power is contested in relational ways within and across selves, that personal and collective healing can occur. In other words, relational advocacy toward mutual engagement intentionally works to name the tensions and contradictions that arise/exist while working both, across differing positionalities and against oppressive policies and practices.

Relational advocacy pushes back on dominant cultural practices by generating social performances (e.g. troubling power relations) that counter hegemonic practices and thus contribute toward redefining self and self with others. Hence, by agitating power dynamics, relational advocacy works to dismantle dominant cultural narratives that attempt to dehumanize communities that are oppressed. In doing so, relational advocacy works to name

the tensions and acknowledges that it is within this space of contestation that personal and collective transformation has the potential to transpire. More specifically, it is within this relational space that individual and collective healing is embraced, and the development of new anti-oppressive frames in our work toward liberation can be realized.

Relational advocacy attends to being mindful of the contradictions and tensions across advocacy contexts (e.g. schooling, teachers and students). In this sense, although relational advocacy is situated between the push and pull between liberation and oppression (self to self, self with others, and with systems of power – see Ellsworth, 1997), engaging with these tensions is precisely what can contribute toward dismantling oppressive policies and practices. Consequently, troubling our positionality and working in contradictory ways, and acknowledging the constrictive contexts that evoke such actions, provides us the ability to agitate and push back on dominant cultural narratives and develop new stories that honor our humanity.

*Tenet 2. Redefining dominant and hegemonic systems* attends to a commitment toward naming and transforming hegemonic contexts informed by a critical consciousness. Therefore, this tenet builds on Freire's notion of critical consciousness and the naming of hegemonic spaces, thus recognizing the potential to contribute toward dismantling institutional racism and systems of oppression. For example, drawing from Critical Race Theory, naming and reframing the dominant legal narrative within the legal paradigm relies on the counterstories of racialized groups within the legal paradigm as situated-advocacy toward the formation of equitable laws. In this sense, Tenet 2 acknowledges that dominant cultural narratives are driven by commonsense thinking and practices. Thus, such narratives have the potential to be dismantled when a mutual engagement toward collective

consciousness raising is practiced. Consequently, the development of new anti-oppressive frames rooted in action and reflection – praxis, has the potential to transform our current situatedness.

*Tenet 3. Research as a dialectical space* acknowledges the racist legacy of research that historically (and currently) perpetuated racist polices, practices, and hierarchies through what Bonilla-Silva termed, *white methods*. . This tenet starts with the assumption that scholars conducting research toward social justice today are working within a hegemonic context shaped by racism. Furthermore, if the research is conducted in uncritical ways, it may unintentionally contribute toward the affirmation of a racialized hierarchy. Therefore, naming and grappling with the contradictions and partiality of our research is a crucial component of minimizing the perpetuation of oppressive research practices. In other words, strategically employing research methods toward racial/social justice requires a critique of hegemonic systems and practices and the research process itself.

Working within institutional constraints, while informed by a critical consciousness, requires approaching the research process in strategic ways that honor decolonizing methods of research. Paradoxically, at other times, it necessitates working in contradictory ways and using traditional hegemonic research methods that are granted greater legitimacy. Thus, having awareness of the contradiction and tension that arise in such work, while challenging dominant narratives and advocating for racial/social justice within spheres of influence where such methods are privileged, requires us to shift our strategies depending on institutional constraints and freedoms (while being mindful and minimizing the reproduction or contribution toward dominant narratives). In other words, this requires having an activist agenda and understanding the hegemonic space and audience within which the research

questions are situated and being strategic about the potential impact of the findings. Simultaneously, it requires honoring the mutual advocacy efforts by impacted communities, grassroots organizations, students, and/or scholars working toward racial justice from different spaces.

**Teacher and Student Participatory Action Research**

tsPAR draws from participatory action research (PAR)/youth participatory action research (yPAR) studies which intentionally honor and center the experiences and knowledge of local communities working toward racial and/or social justice. As reflected in the review of the literature, communities engaged with PAR/yPAR have changed unjust policies and/or practices, transformed their own lives, and the lives of those they love (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Stovall & Delgado, 2009). Inspired by the legacy of PAR/yPAR, tsPAR aims to contribute toward participatory research by turning a critical lens onto the process that students and teachers engage in while teaching and learning in public schools and classrooms. For example, tsPAR troubles how the external supporter(s) (teacher/researcher) experiences "formally or informally some kind of praxis" and "the promotion of people's collectives and their systematic praxis (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 25)." It does so, by highlighting the relationship between the external supporter and local community, when although practiced, is predominantly missing in the documentation of PAR/yPAR studies. Consequently, when the external supporter'(s) (teacher/researcher) involvement is not documented, the tensions, uncertainty, contradictions, and vulnerably of the "co-researchers" relational/methodological process goes unnoticed. Additionally, it positions the teacher as an expert, wherein the teacher's learning, transformation, and engagement with the local community is disconnected from the narrative they co-create.

Thus, naming the existing power relations, while centering the local community's engagement with PAR/yPAR, carves out a critical space to grapple with hegemonic systems and practices and further challenges the ways in which educational research perpetuates oppressive practices. In this way, educational researchers may turn their lens with greater intention onto the relationship between external supporters (including teachers/researchers) and local communities (including students/young people) engaged in PAR/yPAR that work to name the power dynamics (between teacher/researcher and students/researchers and between students and students) and the spaces of distress, in order to contribute toward dismantling them. In doing so, the process between students and teacher are acknowledged, therefore honoring the relationship between teacher and students. This approach not only humanizes the student and teacher relationship, but also protects the process of PAR/yPAR from being coopted when employed in public schools. For example, the potential for liberating practices to be watered down or coopted is heightened when embraced by teachers, school officials, school districts, and/or administrators and when they are employed in a constricting and oppressive context such as schooling and conducted in uncritical ways.

*Figure 1* below, shows the ways in which the external supporter (teacher) works alongside the local community (students) while engaging together in the process of PAR/yPAR. *Figure 1* reflects the assumption that when PAR/yPAR are employed, the power relations are deconstructed between teacher and students. For example, an underlying purpose of PAR is that when employed, the local community and external supporter engage in the process together as "co-researchers." Consequently, the hope is that by engaging with the process of PAR/yPAR, the research process itself dismantles power dynamics between the participants (between students and students, and between students and teacher, and

between students) involved in the PAR/yPAR process. However, the external supporter (teacher) is often missing during the analysis/documentation of the PAR/yPAR process, thus in some ways contradicting the traditional underlying principles of PAR that is intentional about honoring the "co-researchers'" process. Therefore, when this relationship is left out of these spaces of distress (which arise as a result of power dynamics), it positions PAR/yPAR as a methodological process that occurs in a liberatory relational space (vertical) pushing back on hegemonic social structures and systems of oppression (horizontal).

*Figure 1*. PAR/yPAR process

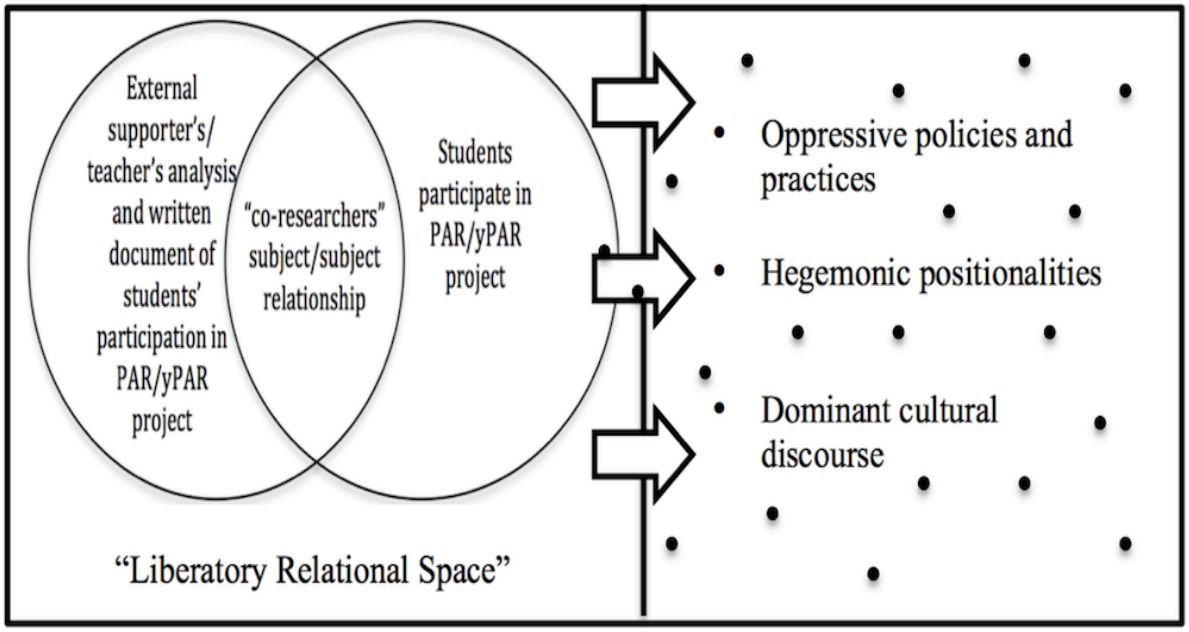
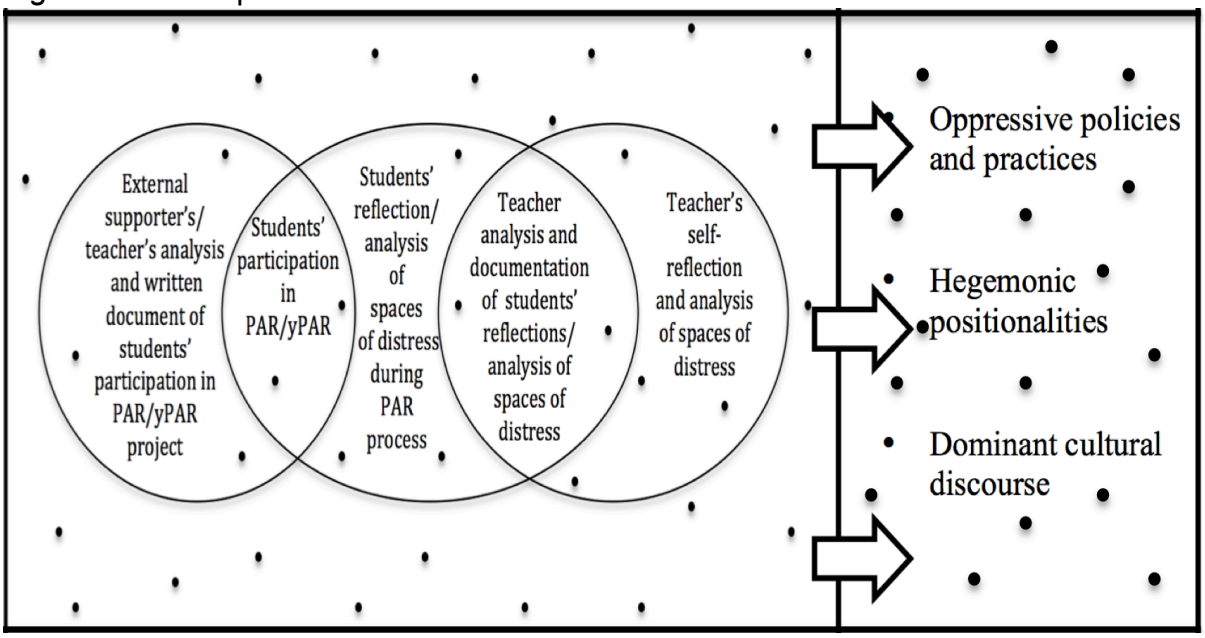



*Figure 2* below shares the vision of problematizing the absence of the external supporter (teacher) from the analysis and/documentation of the PAR/yPAR process, by suggesting a critical approach to PAR/yPAR guided by a CRP-Ed lens. CRP-Ed troubles the ways in which the external supporter (teacher) and local community (students) engage with the process of PAR/yPAR. More specifically, CRP-Ed requires acknowledging the contradictions and tensions that exist between teacher and students, and students with

students (power relations). Additionally, CRP-Ed requires the naming of oppressive policies and practices when engaging in praxis-based educational research rooted in racial/social justice, while simultaneously naming the tensions that arise/exist during the methodological process. Thus, tsPAR responds to CRP-Ed's call for anti-oppressive thinking and practices in educational research by pushing the possibilities for "co-researchers" to develop their own capacities by naming, grappling with, and embracing the spaces of distress while working toward self-determination and collective liberation.

*Figure 2*. tsPAR process




Additionally, the dots in *Figure* 2 above represent the power relations that exist during the tsPAR process. The difference between *Figure 1* and *2* is that the process in *Figure 2* acknowledges that while engaging with tsPAR and pushing back on systems of oppression (similar to *Figure 1*), power relations among the participants continue to exist (absent in *Figure 1*). This depiction urges an acknowledgment of the relational exchanges during the participatory research process (i.e. documenting teacher and student relationship

and student and student relationship). Thus, *Figure 2* recognizes that the relationship exists in spaces of distress where the push and pull between oppression and liberation are contested. *Figure 1*, reflects they ways in which discourse and practices generated from PAR/yPAR pushes back on systems of oppression, however at times does not document the spaces of distress that local communities and external supporters experience while engaging with PAR/yPAR.

As mentioned previously, the process of tsPAR is occurring within a CRP-Ed framework. In other words, these tenets require acknowledging the intersections of power both vertically and horizontally (see Freire, 1970). More specifically, CRP-Ed requires naming systems of oppression (vertical) while simultaneously having the researcher turn their lens onto how we are also working in-between them (horizontal). More specifically, the research process of tsPAR is guided by the underlying assumptions of CRP-Ed, as summarized earlier in this chapter. In this section, I elaborate on what this means. For example, CRP-Ed acknowledges that working within the tensions that exist, allows for the processing and creation of new stories, while simultaneously pushing back on the larger systems of oppression that shape our lives. Understanding how we build relationships, redefine ourselves, and work toward self-determination in spaces where we negotiate, perpetuate, transform, and/or dismantle power dynamics, can facilitate working together toward racial and/or social justice. This is what Freire (1976) named, "the practice of freedom."

What this means, is that the researcher is mindful of power differentials and hierarchies; and engages students and themself in reflection activities that allow for acknowledging, naming, embracing and/or mediating the tensions that exist within

themselves, with others, and with systems of oppression. Validating the limitations and partiality of our attempt to redefine and dismantle power structures (some of which cannot be changed at that moment) contributes toward working together in more humanizing ways that rejects false-pretenses and builds trust – thus moving us toward building a beloved community.

tsPAR is a methodological process that honors and adds to traditional PAR/yPAR studies, in that it intentionally acknowledges and addresses the space of distress that teachers and students experiences in their classroom/school. tsPAR turns its lens onto the spaces of distress where the push and pull between – oppression and liberation; Eurocentric knowledge and indigenous knowledge; conformity and self-determination; dominant cultural narratives and grassroots/local cultural narratives; schooling and education; internalized oppression and critical consciousness; teacher's positionality and students' positionality; certainty and uncertainty; and individual and community occur. It is within this space of *distress* this study turned a critical lens, while problematizing our classroom community's situatedness. These tensions held a space in the classroom with the potential to contribute toward redefining the purpose of schooling and who we are. Holding this space between these binaries (spaces of distress) is where teaching and learning become an act of love and provide us the imagination to develop something new.

Additionally, reflecting on both the theoretical and empirical studies reviewed for the purposes of this study – whether the literature was generated from a position towards social justice or from a neoliberal stance – both bodies of educational research had the habit of severing the relationship between students and teachers. In other words, the discourse was either about how teachers teach and act or about how students learn and act. Yet, the story of

the relationship between the two in regards to inspiring agency and the practice toward freedom was rarely shared. It is within this space of discomfort, tension, and possibility that this study problematized while simultaneously carving out a space for reframing what it means to be a student or teacher. Indeed, by developing new frames and sites of resistance rooted in the *process* of co-creating liberating spaces by students and teachers that educational discourse can transcend the deficit perspective that blames students and teachers for the pitfalls of a U.S. capitalism system (Kumashiro, 2012).

For example, by exploring the ways in which grassroots efforts involve teachers and students, or educational researchers and grassroots communities, can bring meaningful insight into how these unions navigate, perpetuate and/or work in contradictory ways (while simultaneously being mindful of not leaving the spaces of tension and/or discomfort) (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015). To this end, naming the contradictions and recognizing the tensions that anti-oppressive work generates, is an act of love. It is an act of love because if there is tension, or contradiction, it means that there is an engagement with the push and pull between oppression and liberation. When this space is abandoned or not acknowledged, is when the space resides on the side of the oppressor (Freire, 1970). Therefore, the nine principles of tsPAR outlined below, along with the three tenets of CRP-Ed, will support this qualitative study and honor students' and teacher's agency, relationships, and humanity. In aligning with the language of PAR, the "external supporter" is the teacher and the "local community" represents the students, when discussed in the principles below.

Principle 1: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto their relationship (between students, and students and teacher) while naming/documenting: the tensions, contradictions, possibilities and/or constraints that arise/exist.

Principle 2: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto systems of oppression (classroom/school/community) while naming/documenting the tensions, contradictions, and/or constraints that arise/exist.

Principle 3: The teacher acknowledges that the PAR study the students engage with, (although developed, designed, and conducted by the students) is a course requirement and not a choice (and therefore contradictory to principles of PAR), and is part of their enrollment in a course.

Principle 4: While following the principles of tsPAR, the teacher honors the students' identified problem and works alongside the local community throughout: the methodological process of their PAR study (including teaching the process of PAR, providing support and resources, etc.); the development and dissemination of the local community's project; and acknowledges that tsPAR intersects the local community's PAR project in contradictory ways.

Principle 5: The teacher acknowledges the constraints, contradictions, and limitations of the "subject-subject" relationship and chooses not to seek the students' participation in the development of research questions and data collection instruments, data collection, and analysis toward a dissertation, beyond the students' local PAR project. Additionally, the teacher does not seek the participation of the local community's analysis that is in support of the teacher's advancement of a document (e.g. dissertation, thesis, scholarly article/book chapter), which an institution does not allow shared authorship by the students. The teacher acknowledges that due to differing positionalities, asking students to engage in such work is complicated by the student and teacher relationship, regardless of the critical work being done to dismantle power dynamics.

Principle 6: The teacher acknowledges that the PAR project is conceived of, developed and framed within a classroom and that they influence intentionally and unintentionally the students' PAR project. Therefore, the teacher documents the ways in which their involvement impacted the students' study. This impact includes researcher influence, power dynamics, tensions that arose, possibilities, and how participation alongside students impacted the teacher.

Principle 7: The teacher acknowledges that at least three different research dynamics will occur simultaneously while engaging with tsPAR, including: 1) the students' engagement with PAR which honors students as co-researchers with one-another; 2) the teacher conducting research *on* the students they teach and learn with, while engaged in a PAR project together; and 3) investigating the first two principles of tsPAR, wherein, both the students and teacher dynamic and processing of tensions are documented and analyzed by the teacher and informed by both the students and the teacher.

Principle 8: The teacher acknowledges that teaching and learning alongside students while documenting the tsPAR process supports pushing back on the neoliberal agenda/oppressive policies and practices and simultaneously contradicts the "subject-subject" relationship by perpetuating dominant cultural practices due to the oppressive and constricting context of schooling and the power dynamics in the teacher/student relationship.

Principle 9: The teacher acknowledges that although tsPAR contradicts the "subject-subject" relationship, engaging in the process critically generates the potential to dismantle oppressive policies and practices through naming the tensions, contradictions and constraints therefore supporting a humanizing process rooted in hope, possibilities, and transformation.

tsPAR draws from the underlying methodological process of PAR which has "an explicit goal of 'action' or intervention into problems being studied" (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. 64). Furthermore, "PAR is premised on the principles of sociopolitical justice and equity" (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. 65) which aligns with the theoretical framework and questions posed for this study. In other words, tsPAR draws from PAR in that it aligns closely with Freire's (1970) notion of action and reflection – praxis. The principles of tsPAR also build from the notion that, "PAR itself is a form of intervention that can foster personal and academic growth and the development among marginalized youth" making tsPAR an ideal methodological process to utilize for the purposes of this study (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. 66).

## Research Site

The Spanish Land Grant allowed for the acquisition of indigenous lands, including the dispossession and displacement of the Mechoopda tribe in 1850. The tribe now resides on a federal reservation just outside of the Chico city limits. CSU-Chico located in the heart of Chico, now sits on top of over half of the Mechoopda tribe's land and so does the school site for this study.

Chico was incorporated in 1872 and encompasses 33 square miles. The city has several creeks and a two-lane highway that cut through it. Chico is home to one the largest municipal parks (3670 acres) in the U.S. with beautiful creeks, rivers, bike trials, hiking trails, swimming holes, and flora and fauna. The median home price in Chico is $257, 000 and currently has an unemployment rate of 8% (City Records, 2015). A famous micro-brewing company, along with other private businesses, education, healthcare, and agriculture are some of the main sources of jobs in Chico (Chico City Records, 2015).

This study took place in a public, non-charter junior high school in Chico, California

where I have been teaching the sciences for fifteen years. During my first year of teaching, the city of Chico had a population of 59,954 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), and our science department included five full-time teachers. Although, Chico's population has increased to 86,187 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), our science department has decreased to three full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. Additionally, our student population has dropped from 886 students in 2001 to 587 at this current time, (California Department of Education, 2015). During my time at Bidwell Junior High School (BJHS) our administration has changed nine times (principals and vice principals).

BJHS is a Title 1 school that has been labeled as a Program Improvement school by the U.S. government for the last eight years. This means that every year, parents in the community receive a letter from our school district advising them of our low state and federal standardized test scores and their option to Form 10 (transfer) their student(s) to a different school.

The current student population at BJHS is 643 students. 53% of students receive free or reduced lunches. 12% of students have IEPs/504s, and 7% of students are English language learners. The percentages of students' racial/ethnic demographics, based on U.S. categories, were as follows: a) 63% White, b) 22% Latin@, c) 7% Asian, d) 2% African American/Black, e) 2% two or more races, f) 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, g) 1% Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, h) 1% Filipino, and i) 1% declined to state.

## Participants

### *Students and Teacher*

The participants and/or "co-researchers" for this study included the seventh grade students I work alongside, and myself. A total of 168 seventh graders, in five different

periods, enrolled in life science, gave me permission to gather data in our life science class for the purposes of this study. I collected data from all of the students who gave me permission in the form of surveys, classroom assignments (which included students' journaling, anti-oppressive science curriculum, and their PAR project), and audio and/or video recorded classroom teaching and learning.

## Ethical Considerations

Both the tenets of CRP-Ed and the principles of tsPAR require humanizing research practices, therefore supporting the ethical considerations necessary for all of the participants involved in this study. Additionally, I was consistently mindful of my positionality as teacher, researcher, and co-researcher and engaged in these multiple roles in ways that in no way impacted the participants for this study in harmful ways (psychologically, emotionally, socially, or academically).

Furthermore, I received permission from the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) in September (2015). After the IRBPHS gave me permission to conduct research, I provided a detailed description of the research process, attending to the guidelines stipulated by the IRBPHS in a consent form asking both parents and students for permission. I shared in the consent form that although the data I collect is part of my usual teaching practices, which parents and students may choose not to have their data used for the purposes of this study. In this sense, only data from participants that gave me permission was part of the data analysis process for the purposes of this study. I shared with both students and parents that there would be no disadvantages for their non-participation. Finally, I expressed the ways in which this study supported both the students and me toward improving the teaching and learning experiences

for our classroom community.

## Data Collection Instruments

This study was multilayered in that several research studies occurred simultaneously, and eventually encompassed the entirety of this study. First, students in each class period engaged in different PAR projects. More specifically, each class period chose their own PAR project which they worked collaboratively on during the school year. Second, we engaged together in tsPAR throughout the school year. Lastly, I collected and analyzed data on both processes, which comprised the documentation for this study.

Multiple data collection instruments were used in order to triangulate the experiences occurring in five class periods of seventh grade life science. This study took place during one school year, beginning in August 2015 and ending in April 2016. For the purposes of this study, the data instruments included: video recordings of class sessions; my personal journal; students' journals; student surveys; field notes; and students' work.

**Video recordings.** A total of 50 hours of video recordings of classroom teaching and learning, in addition to a 30 minute video recording of a school board meeting took place. These recordings provided me the ability to see what was occurring in the classroom or during the school board meeting, from a different lens. Video recordings occurred on the days when classroom dialogue or activities relating to this study occurred.

**Field notes.** During class sessions, I wrote down notes that had the potential to inform this study. Oftentimes, due to the inability of writing the information down while class was in session, I made a mental note and wrote the information down during passing periods, during my lunch break, or after school.

**Personal journal.** I wrote in my personal journal two to three times a week during

this study. The bulk of my journal writings encompassed my thoughts about interactions with students, analysis of myself, and reflections on how curricular activities were impacting students' learning, agency, sense of self, and power dynamics. These notes differed from my field notes in that my field notes represented experiences that occurred at a specific moment. On the other hand, my writings in my journal occurred after some time has lapsed since the events had taken place. In essence, these writings took place when I had begun to grapple and reflect on our classroom experiences.

**Students' journals.** Students participated in journal writes about once a week during the school year. Their journals contained responses to questions that I asked them during the first or last five to ten minutes of class or during moments when spaces of tension and contradictions were experienced or emerging. The questions posed encompassed the following, but were not limited to: a) how they felt about working in groups or the classroom community, b) how they felt about themselves, c) how they felt about what they are learning, d) questions in relationship to content, labs or activities they had recently participated in, e) reflections on critical pedagogy, classroom dynamics, tension, and power dynamics, and f) suggestions for future assignments and practices that would support their full development.

**Students' Surveys.** Students were given a comparative survey that I created which contained 15 questions on the topic of race and racism on the very first day of the genetics unit. The surveys were anonymous. I passed out surveys numbered one to forty to every class. I then asked students to write their number in their daily planner so they would be able to retrieve their survey number two weeks later when I ask them to take the same survey again in order to compare their perceptions on race and racism before and after the unit of study. Students also took short surveys once a month that focus on one or more of the

following: humanizing pedagogy, standard-based curriculum, tension, power dynamics, healing, self-worth, sense of belonging, identity, liberation, and oppression. I created these surveys on a monthly basis and the focus of the surveys depended on our current situatedness.

**Students' Work.** Throughout the school year, I collected student work as I usually do, but sorted out certain assignments that aligned with the purposes of this study. Students were provided individual three ring binders in which they kept their journal entries and all of their course work and were kept in class (usual part of classroom practices). Students' work included, but was not limited to: labs, activities, group projects, self analysis of their work, student and teacher made rubrics, student created diagrams, short answer essays, human rights documents, and work relating to their participatory action research project.

**PAR process.** The yearlong PAR project that students engaged with is also included. Due to the nature of PAR projects, students participated in: a) conducting interviews of peers, teachers, school staff, and district officials b) created data instruments, gathered and analyzed their data, and e) took action to change the problems that they identified at our school site.

In December, students in each class period identified a problem they wanted to explore. All students' ideas were written on the whiteboard for everyone to vote on. Once the identified problem was chosen, students generated a qualitative research question as a class, while I guided the process. Students briefly reviewed literature that related to the problem they identified. Each group read different articles and shared their notes with the class. As a class, students generated two paragraphs with citations that comprised their mini-literature review. Throughout the months of January and February students selected/created their data instruments and began collecting data in relationship to the question they posed. The students

chose the data instruments, after I familiarized them with several different data instruments. In groups of four, students chose which research instrument they wanted to use and began collecting data around campus. Students then shared out their data with the class.

In February and/or March, students analyzed their data, and again shared their findings with the class. Students then discussed the ways in which they wanted to take action or continue to take action. Students also began creating their PAR newspaper, which was disseminated to the entire school community in May (all five periods PAR projects were combined into the document which included, samples of their data collection, and a complete write up of their PAR project). For the remainder of the school year, students continued to take action and/or reflected on the changes they contributed toward in regards to the schooling practices which they felt were inequitable, harmful, unjust, or created barriers for themselves and others.

## Data Analysis

Both the tenets of CRP-Ed and the principles of tsPAR accommodated using grounded theory in order to analyze the data (Charmaz, 2014; Foss & Waters, 2007). Using grounded theory, supported the process of having the data inform my analysis, and thus supported the development of a new conceptual framework, which I named, "cultivating pedagogy." Additionally, by using qualitative data analysis techniques and using multiple data gathering instruments, I was able to triangulate the data, generating meaningful insight toward this study. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) stated that, "by using multiple types of data analysis and thus, triangulating the results of a qualitative study…the results will be more trustworthy and, as a result, more meaningful" (p. 602).

The qualitative analysis techniques that were used for the purposes of this study

included qualitative comparative analysis and constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). I began the analysis process by note taking or memoing and then coding the data I gathered in order to identify and categorize the emerging themes. Additionally, triangulating the data supported this study by bringing validity to what was experienced in our seventh grade life science classroom from an emic perspective while honoring the processes of tsPAR and CRP-Ed.

The nine principles of tsPAR and the three tenets of CRP-Ed described earlier in this chapter supported me toward remaining mindful, accountable, and unsettled in relationship to my differing positionalities (teacher, researcher, co-researcher, learner, adult) while working alongside the students enrolled in the life science classes I taught. Furthermore, the three tenets of CRP-Ed guided and aligned with the methodological process of tsPAR and the purpose of this study. By employing the three tenets of CRP-Ed, this research process was guided by a critical lens that was directed toward the research questions posed in this study. Lastly, both CRP-Ed and tsPAR evoked a mutual engagement between everyone involved in the research process that honored the building of relationships rooted in trust, love, respect, and dignity.

In conclusion, employing tsPAR through a CRP-Ed lens supported the three components that made up the theoretical framework for this study, which included critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, and the building of beloved communities. Both the methodological process of tsPAR and the guiding tenets of CRP-Ed aligned closely with the theoretical bases and supported the purpose of this study. By turning a critical lens toward the teacher and student relationship, this study disrupted and troubled the ways in which students

and teacher were defined by the dominant cultural narrative and generated new narratives that humanized and honored students and teachers. In doing so, the possibilities for liberatory education and hope for justice were realized.

# Chapter IV: FINDINGS

## Teacher – Researcher's Profile

I migrated from Iran to the U.S. when I was three years old and shortly there after found myself navigating a public school system that was designed without my humanity in mind. Growing up in Glendale, CA, I always felt like something was not right, especially in the context of my schooling. At the time, I didn't know what it was, but I knew people weren't being treated right and life was about trying to find temporary relief. My daily strategy was to make it through the day by being clever enough and strong enough to not get hurt or busted, and also smart and tough enough to hurt someone else if I had to. I had a really good heart I was just not able to show it.

I barely survived the public school system. I did so, by developing survival skills that supported me in navigating a dehumanizing form of education that I had no respect for. I was known as "the toughest girl" in school. I was a fighter, for sure. I was violent and abusive to others and myself. I was also tracked throughout my schooling. I had basic math classes, to the point where in eleventh grade they were teaching me "math skills" which included lessons on how to write a check. My navigation of schooling consisted of: getting in the easiest classes, forging my truancies, going to continuation school, and making up 110 credits my senior year so that I could graduate. In the end, I graduated. I graduated on stage and on time. Not for me, because at the time I could care less; but for my mom who cried and told me that with everything we were going through financially and emotionally – the one thing that would make her life worth living, was me graduating on time and on stage. So I did.

Consequently, I unknowingly lived with and reacted to oppressive polices and

practices in harmful ways both as a young person and during my early years as a teacher.

For example, I was teaching my students the same skills of how to survive and how to get by. It was a game of survival. I had never felt passion or purpose in my life. I had actually not felt much of anything. It was not until many years later during my eighth year of teaching that I was able to name the root cause of the pain, mistrust, tensions, and contradictions – that I had developed the ability to numb and justify any and all behavior in order to survive a dehumanizing form of public schooling. This life changing moment occurred when I was introduced to Freire's work on critical pedagogy and Kumashiro's work on anti-oppressive education. It was at this time, that my teaching transformed from teaching for survival, toward teaching for liberation. Since then, my curriculum and practices have consistently been shaped by my development and understanding of my current situatedness alongside my students in a constricting and oppressive schooling system driven by neoliberal discourse, policies and practices. I mention my own cultivation of critical consciousness, because I myself am continuously engaged in the processes of healing and learning alongside my students. In a tension filled process of reflection, purpose, and action, I question my teaching practices, am reminded of my contradictions, and am working toward loving myself – so that I can love my students even more. These tensions, that I mindfully work in and through alongside my students, exist/arise due to the push and pull between cultivation and dispossession. More specifically, when teachers and students engage with the struggle between liberation and oppression, education and schooling, indigenous/local knowledge and Eurocentric curriculum, humanness and Whiteness, and self-love and self-hate we courageously and mindfully enter spaces of distress. When we do so, teaching and learning became an act of love and provide us the imagination to dream of something new (Kelley,

2002).

**Working in, with, and through the Contradictions**

During the time of this study, my students and I were situated within a seventh grade life science classroom that embodied units of study that aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS), and also the current California State Science Standards. Science teachers and students are experiencing an interesting time, in that we are required to teach and learn the current state standards while simultaneously engaging with pockets of the NGSS. In three years, the NGSS will be the new standards that teachers and students will be held accountable to through high-stakes testing. Therefore, our district-wide plan required teachers to implement at least one NGSS unit in order to transition toward yearlong classroom practices aligned with the NGSS in preparation for the first administration of federal testing.

The units of study that we engaged with in our classroom during the 2015-16 school year were aligned with the state-standards (both new and old) and included cell processes, genetics, evolution, earth's history, human body systems and the scientific method. My students and I engaged with these topics throughout the school year while at the same time critically examining and pushing back during times when the textbook, topic of study, or common sense thinking and practices imposed marginalizing and oppressive narratives and practices in our classroom. We did this while simultaneously carving out a space that nurtured the building of a beloved community that honored our identities and our capacity to create, heal, transform, and love.

## Structure of the Findings

This study examined the ways in which our classroom community engaged with

humanizing pedagogy and research towards the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of students and teacher and the building of a beloved community. In our classroom we drew from three humanizing frameworks including critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1998), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2015), and the notion of beloved communities (hooks 1995; King 1957; Ginwright 2010; Royce, 1913), all of which contributed to working toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community.

In the pages ahead, I start by explicating the logic that undergirded the ways in which this chapter was intentionally designed to provide a representation of the emergent themes in a linear structure, by strategically embedding the themes within specific "phases." Each phase represented divisions of time during the school year. In doing so, I intentionally featured the findings in a meaningful way that afforded an emic perspective into how our classroom community "cultivated pedagogy" throughout the school year. In this sense, in acknowledging that culture is a story, it would be contradictory in nature to discuss the cultivation of pedagogy and/ or teacher and student relationships by structuring this chapter solely based on the emergent themes and/or from an etic perspective. What I mean, is that the themes that emerged did so, due to ongoing action and reflection – praxis, which my students and I were co-creators of. Therefore, to honor the process of cultivation requires sharing the findings as a story which developed and was simultaneously informed by the data in real time and after the final analysis of the data.

Additionally, I discuss how this structure supported the representation of the findings in ways that highlighted the relationships our classroom community developed with each

other (self to self, students with students, students with teacher) and with the world. Structuring the findings in phases supported and aligned with the methodological process of tsPAR and the guiding tenets of CRP-Ed. Thus, by embedding the emergent themes within specific phases that addressed our situatedness during specific times and spaces, supported naming how we "cultivated pedagogy" with each other and for each other. More specifically, I grouped these phases into three sections: 1) building a beloved community, 2) cultivating critical consciousness, and 3) engaging with participatory action research.

I use these groupings because each one represents a phase that reflects specific moments in time, which capture particular teaching and learning practices that influenced the themes that emerged. I identified these three phases after three rounds of data analysis. The first round of analysis occurred in order to guide my teaching for the purposes of facilitating classroom practices that were informed by real time, immediate data analysis and reflection, which shaped classroom instruction on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. This first round occurred through note taking and memoing. Subsequently, the second round of analysis occurred through the process of coding the data which I had memoed during the first round. During this process I was able to identify the preliminary themes. Finally, the third round of analysis occurred once all the data had been memoed and coded. During this phase, I used deductive coding in order to analyze the preliminary emergent themes which were tentatively categorized in round two. This process led to the final analysis of the coded data, thus supporting me in identifying and categorizing the final themes. These themes aligned with the research questions posed for the purposes of this study.

Following the third round of coding and categorizing, I began seeking ways to structure the analysis in a format that would both speak to the emergent themes and support

me later when discussing the findings through a CRP-Ed lens that honored the process of tsPAR. In other words, the underlying assumptions of CRP-Ed (described earlier in Chapter Three) required engaging with tsPAR both in-practice and in-research, using a critical lens that guided and brought to life, the principles of tsPAR. What developed from this process were the three phases I introduced earlier in this section: Building a Beloved Community, Cultivating a Critical Consciousness, and Engaging with PAR. These three phases represent a structure that was organized to depict a linear story, while simultaneously intersecting the emergent themes that weave in and out of each phase. The emergent themes that informed the groupings, and are interwoven throughout the three phases include: 1) awareness of self and others, 2) agency, 3) critical consciousness, 4) cultivation of knowledge, and 5) cultivation of relationships.

Before introducing the three phases, I start by sharing several journal responses from our classroom community, in order to provide a bigger picture into what experiencing humanizing pedagogy in the classroom meant to us. My intention here is to frame the overall year and thereafter share the three phases that encompass the themes that emerged, thus providing a generative context toward the ways in which we experienced humanizing pedagogy in our classroom.

Junior's brief, yet powerful statement below reflects how our classroom community experienced humanizing pedagogy throughout the school year, stating, "it makes me feel more like a person than an abnormal freak" (November, 2015). More specifically, about two to three months into the school year is when students began to fully embrace this "different" kind of pedagogy. The following quote by Carly highlights the ways in which students began to question the dominant narrative positing that, "Our curriculum is different because it set

off an 'internal fire' and motivates me to do all that I can to show people that people of color are just as good as white people and women are just as good as men" (Journal entry, November, 2015). Students also reflected on how they saw themselves, as echoed in Jessie's and Fatima's responses respectively, when they shared that a humanizing form of education in the classroom, "makes me feel like I am important" (Journal entry, September, 2015) and "I learn to think that I am beautiful" (Journal entry, November, 2015). Lastly, our classroom community reflected on their agency, and their capacity to create and transform, which is illustrated in Aubrey's statement, when she shared that, "what is mind blowing is that students here made their own elective!" (Student work, February, 2016).

The brief introduction of these particular student narratives above were intended to provide some familiarity and context into the ways in which humanizing pedagogy was experienced in our classroom throughout the school year. To this end, the three phases that speak to humanizing pedagogy are discussed in great detail and were cultivated from an emic perspective rooted in student-student relationships and/or teacher-students relationships.

**Findings: Phase One (mid August to mid November)**

In this section, I begin by sharing the first phase which I named, Building a Beloved Community. Phase One represents the first three months (mid August to mid November) of the school year. I highlight specific classroom experiences that occurred during this time in order to provide meaningful insight into three of the five themes which emerged from the data. The themes that encompass this phase include agency, cultivation of relationships, and awareness of self and others, What ensues is a brief introduction describing our classroom practices, followed with narratives by students and myself that reflect the themes that emerged in Phase One.

**Agency (Recognition)**

During the first month of the school year, as we started to get to know each other, our work toward developing trust, love, and community began. Students engaged with activities that supported their exploration of their identities and learning styles. In addition to these activities, as we were preparing to create and sustain a classroom dynamic rooted in love and trust, students shared out what worked well and what didn't work well for them when they worked in groups during their k-6 schooling experiences. Through this reflective process, they developed a written framework that structured the process of what working in groups together meant and reflected on the ways in which they planned to honor their identities and trouble their differing dispositions. Therefore, each class period (five periods) developed a framework that included five categories that would support them toward creating and sustaining the types of behaviors they wanted to experience when working together. Each one of these categories also came with a detailed explanation that the students developed as a class. However, for the purposes of this study, below I share the categories from two class periods as exemplars. Providing exemplars of the categories brings forth greater insight into students' responses and reflections, which are discussed directly after the five main categories of the two frameworks, represented below. More specifically the attributes students identified were essential while working with each other:

- Period Five:
    - Trust
    - Respect
    - Equal Participation
    - Work Hard

    - Help Each Other
- Period Six:
    - Listening
    - Respect
    - Communication
    - Equality
    - Humor

After students had worked in groups (four students in a group) twice during the first two weeks of the school year, they responded in their first journal entry (August, 2015) for the year, which asked students to, "Reflect on the ways in which your group is working well together using the framework you developed as a class. Also, please think about and write down what you or your group can do differently to honor the framework you created even more."

The students' responses highlight the experiences they had while working on the Learning Styles and Identity Activity together in groups. Both activities supported them in creating a group poster that included group members giving their group a name, exploring their similarities and differences through conversation, and creating a statement together that shared how their similarities and differences would be beneficial for their group when engaging in group work. The Fifth period group named themselves Science Warriors (Journal entry, August, 2015) and expressed what was going well in their group, and also what they wanted to improve on:

> Our group worked well together because we all got to come up with ideas for the poster which helped our trust with each other. And we are all different so we all have

> different ideas. We listen to each other ideas take in new things and come to an agreement. Our group could improve by helping each other out and participate when generating ideas.

Another exemplar is a quote by Team Ninja (period six), and shows the ways in which they experienced working in a group together and also their intentions for working together in the future. Team Ninja explained:

> Our group worked well together by listening and compromising with each other's opinions. We were all easy-going and calm, which really helped us work easily and respectfully together. We can improve as a group if we don't stress as much. Our group will also improve if we compremised with each other's ideas better.

Additionally, Team R' Us (period four) asserted that:

> We work well on respecting each other while someone is talking, Also, when someone was confused we explained it in a way that that person could understand, so we could work together and do better. We think we can work on communicating more so that we will understand one another better.

The group, Adamian's Angels (period three) also reflected on their class-made framework in regards to working in groups together, and shared:

> In our group we are teammates. We worked well together by speaking when it was our turn, sharing great ideas, participating, and sharing what made us different. In the future our team could probably work on respecting everyone's differences and opinions. We could also work on being calm and listening to others.

Lastly, Science Deluxe (period two) discussed the ways their behavior both aligned and could be improved in relationship to the categories their class had developed. Science Deluxe expressed that:

> Our group worked well together because we listened to each other and took in each others ideas, and made sure everyone in our group would get a part to help with, or work on. This helped our group because nobody would be left out, and it was great to combine our thoughts to make a better project! Letting everyone help out made a huge improvement to our group and project! Our group could improve while working on other projects by sharing more ideas. This could improve our projects because having more creative thoughts from all group members would let us have new ideas in a simple way, and it's great to have more choices for future projects!

The quotes above reflect how students were able to recognize the ways in which their group had honored the framework that they had developed while simultaneously reflecting on the ways they could further improve their group's dynamics and relationships.

In addition to developing our frameworks, during the first month of school we also shared short autobiographies of our hopes, fears, passions, and backgrounds. We engaged in discussions about agency, resistance, and the purpose of schooling, while simultaneously immersing ourselves in familiar classroom practices such as raising our hands to participate, volunteering to read, and began our first unit of study (cell processes). Below, I share an example of how we negotiated classroom practices that intertwined classroom procedures, agency, resistance, and learning about cell processes that speak to three of the emergent themes – awareness of self and others, cultivation of relationships, and cultivation of knowledge.

**Building a beloved community.** The first time we cracked open the science textbook (by Pearson – a corporation that I find highly problematic and is a contributor to neoliberal policies and practices), I asked students to raise their hands if they would like to read a paragraph aloud. Similar to what I had experienced as a teacher for the last fifteen years, about two to three hands went up. The ways in which I prepared to approach this space of distress[3] differently this year, was inspired by a conversation I had with one of my students a couple of years before. During a conversation with Antonio, he shared an experience that supported me in realizing that there was a need to open up a critical space in the classroom. Antonio stated that:

> I feel really comfortable in class and I wouldn't change a thing. You and the students and getting to know everybody else makes me feel good in here. Like when someone reads a word wrong the person sitting next to them helps them out. I like all the participation and how nobody is laughing when someone gets it wrong. I feel more confident since I've been in here. Like ever since like first grade all the way to sixth grade I never wanted to raise my hand and read and participate and all that because I thought kids would want to laugh at me. And from here when I have nobody has ever laughed. (Audio recording, 2013)

Antonio's response actually caused some discomfort in me that day. I was excited and proud of Antonio and our classroom community, but at the same time, he troubled the ways in

[3] A generative process rooted in tension that transpires in the classroom when students and teachers engage with the push and pull between oppression and liberation (e.g. cultivation and dispossession; fear and hope; harmful/painful pasts and agency; self interest and community; dehumanization and humanity; colonized knowledge and cultivation of knowledge; public and private; hate and love) the classroom with the potential to contribute toward redefining the purpose of schooling and teachers and students. Holding this space between these binaries (spaces of distress) is where teaching and learning become an act of love and provide us the imagination to develop something new. Working within this space of distress honors the necessary and untapped relational bond that inspires and brings forth the movement toward change (Adamian, 2015).

which I acted in the world. He taught me that, I too, even as a grown woman, a veteran teacher, a third year doctoral student, still held those same fears, the ones that he had reflected upon and been courageous enough to begin working in and through. I recognized that, as a doctoral student, I actually rarely shared in class discussions unless asked to, and even oftentimes "passed" when called upon for the same reasons Antonio had resisted reading aloud in class.

**Cultivating Relationships**

If I was going to work with my students in ways that supported them in reaching their full potential, then I too, needed to immerse myself in the same processes I was trying to facilitate for my students. Additionally, what I realized was that situating "reading aloud" as one of our first spaces of distress, would support us in 1) naming a problem many students could connect with, 2) practice self reflection and action, 3) honor agency, 4) embrace community building, and 5) recognize how resistance can be a practice toward personal and social transformation. In this sense, from the very beginning of the school year we could together, as a community, begin to understand and work in and through many of the complex practices that we would be engaging with throughout the school year. These practices would provide us a community–based approach that we could consistently draw on when confronting and navigating different spaces of distress in the classroom with agency and care.

In the years prior to this study, I used to crack a joke to break the tension in order to quickly move away from the discomfort and pain, because although I had the awareness that naming this space was necessary for students and myself, I had not before, consciously and intentionally been mindful or prepared of holding and confronting these spaces of distress with students, through reflection and action. This time, I engaged my students in a way that

was guided by a CRP-Ed lens. This required us to situate ourselves in the processes of tension, naming, and reflection, as discussed in Tenet One of CRP-Ed.

Therefore, the cultivation of this space in the coming years was inspired by Antonio's actions and words. I began asking students the questions I had begun asking myself, but framed it in relationship to reading aloud or participating in class discussions. I asked them, "Do you remember when you or your peers stopped reading aloud? When you stopped raising your hand to ask questions or engage in class discussions? Who took your voice away? Who hurt you? Have you played a role in hurting others?" However, this year I complicated this space differently than the year before.

This year, when a silence and discomfort filled the classroom, I asked the students to write down their experiences and it allowed us to intentionally embrace a space of distress together. For example, it provided students time to reflect on their current dispositions and recognize that their actions/inactions at that very moment, were tied to their past experiences. What follows are exemplars of what situating ourselves in a space of distress meant for students. Khalil who today shoots his hand straight up and volunteers to read aloud any time we read as a class, (whom with his permission I nicknamed "Doctor" in class because his goal is to become a doctor) shared in his journal entry that day (September, 2015):

> I have just always not read sence 2nd grade because I got made fun of because I was a bad reader. Sence then I did not volenteer to read. It had been long years. I loved reading entill then. I hope I can read more.

Another example is from my student Nancy. For the first week of school, I was never able to see her eyes, or her face for that matter. She always had her head down with her hair covering the sides of her face and her arms hugging herself around her waist. Even during

group work, she kept this same posture. In her journal, Nancy shared her past experiences both inside and outside of school that had caused her suffering and why she refused to read aloud:

> Well what happened was [redacted] and I have emotional problems now. My new foster moms and doctors are helping me get better. I also got bullyed every day because I am strange and I have trouble reading. They would call me names and yell at me in class and I will never read or talk in class. I would have to know everyone really good to talk in class. I haven't read since I was in 1st grade. That's why I don't read.

Rayne also embraced this space of distress and shared her painful recollection of how her teacher's actions and her peers' behavior in the past impacted her, confessing in her journal entry (September 2015) that:

> I didn't raise my hand to read out lould since 3rd grade. My fourth grade teacher was mean to us he forsed us to read. You could being crying you still had to. He was always yelling. all we learned was Art, Fizby and pomes. All we ever did was draw ducks and read out lould he wasn't nice if you messed up on a word. We were reading The History of Ducks and I said Malerid wrong and everyone laughed and I was vary louldly talked at that why I don't read out loud.

The students' quotes above, are examples of why only two to three students raised their hands at the beginning of the school year. Their narratives reflect the ways in which their harmful past experiences have caused them to have mistrust, fear, and shame in the classroom. Holding this space of distress, where they grappled with their painful pasts in

order to move toward a hopeful future rooted in self-worth, agency, and trust was the purpose for situating ourselves in a space of distress.

Subsequently, in each class period, after cultivating a space alongside my students to reflect and write about their experiences, the two to three students that had initially volunteered – read aloud. I then talked with my students about both tension and resistance and the many ways in which they showed up. I shared with them that one way resistance shows up in the classroom is students resisting to read or engage at certain times with the curriculum when the experiences are similar to the ones that have caused them pain, shame, or that have caused them to develop mistrust or insecurities. I also mentioned that the way we fight back, heal, and reclaim our agency and voice is by doing precisely what they attempted to take away from us. We talked about how learning at our highest ability, participating, and building love and trust for and with each other, was our way of pushing back on all those experiences that attempted to silence us and dehumanize us (Field notes, September, 2015).

After, I shared with them what it means to hold a space of distress with the intention of healing, building trust and relationships, and taking action toward personal and social transformation. I asked students to write about what they could do to support themselves or others in our classroom community in order to overcome our fears with reading aloud. Students reflected on the ways in which they would be able to contribute toward supporting themselves and their peers in healing from harmful experiences and develop the courage to read and participate in class discussions. Subsequently, the two student narratives that I share below represent how students planned on taking action toward fostering a supportive environment that supported students' in conquering their fears and insecurities toward trusting their classmates and embracing their agency. Additionally, both students discussed

that moving beyond the tension or discomfort was necessary and that they planned on supporting their peers in the process. Brian (September, 2015) asserted how he planned on supporting his peers:

> I am going to support my class mates by telling them if you had something bad happen in the past like you anser a question and get it wrong and others laughed at you or your reading out loud and you say something else let it go. Don't let the pass catch up to you. I'm here to support you to get ahead of it.

Similarly, Erica (September, 2015) considered how she could be supportive of her classmates and also provided a recommendation for what was needed in order to develop a "good classroom community," and suggested that:

> I can support my classmates by listening to them read, not having conversations, and not laughing. All the other students should be respectful and not talk or laugh either. The students that are not reading should try it and push themselves out of their comfort zone. Me and other students need to be supportive when they finally do. That is what I think a good classroom community should be.

Two weeks later, I shared the work of Ginwright, hooks, and King to examine the ways these educators conceptualized the building of a "beloved community." The following quote from, Ethan is an example of how students embraced this notion. He asserted that, "It is important to build a beloved community so that kids that had their power taken away can regain that power and feel loved and respected" (Journal entry, September, 2015). Similarly, Jordan shared his reflections on what it means to build beloved community positing:

> If everybody feels loved or as they are wanted or needed they will thrive in this class and they will feel confortable so they will have good grades, they will look forward to

> this class because they will know that they are welcome and they can be themselves in this class and that's why I think it is important to build a beloved community! (Journal entry, September, 2015)

In the same degree, Jessica shared the ways in which a beloved community would support students in gaining more confidence and similar to Jordan's assertion, she recognized that feeling loved and having a sense of belonging were crucial components. She expressed:

> It is important to build a beloved community because in a classroom there is not a lot of respect. But by building a beloved community in the classroom, everyone will feel belonged and respected. I think having a beloved community in a classroom will help emotionally because with all of the love and sense of belonging it will allow me to feel more confident in myself. (Journal entry, September, 2015)

The quotes from the students above show the ways in which students were envisioning what a beloved community should look like and the possibilities that could transpire based on their actions. They recognized that they were a part of the development of a beloved community and the impact their contributions could potentially have on themselves and their peers.

For the next couple of months, from time to time, I asked students to reflect on their experiences in relationship to building a beloved community. More specifically, once a week, or during times of discomfort, we would stop and write journal entries in order to respond to our current situatedness. For example, at the beginning of the school year, students had shared the ways in which negative past experiences during their schooling or in their personal lives had kept them from reading aloud in class or from participating in class discussions. They also shared that for them to move past these tensions, it required them to be able to trust teachers and students in the classroom. Therefore, I not only wanted to provide a space for

students to reflect, but I also wanted to gain insight into how our community was developing. In response to reading aloud in class, Xai stated that, "Me personally don't like reading out loud because I stutter and read slowly. But now thanks to this class I have overcome this scared habit. I have much respect for this class and I'm sure everyone else feels that to, So I'm excited for the year to come" (Journal entry, November, 2015)! Also, Mai wrote that, "I feel our class is doing good because when the teacher says who wants to read, half the class are raising there hand to read" (Journal entry, November, 2015). Lastly, Barrett shared how he had developed the self-confidence to read aloud in class. Also, because many of his peers had begun reading in class, he recognized that we had a community of readers that read just like him. He had developed a sense of belonging. He stated that:

> I never volunteered to read befor because I don't like reading. I don't like reading because I don't pronounce the word right. (a lot) This class I can read aloud because alot of people are just like me. I sort of like reading in this class because it is way different than [school name redacted].

Students also began to recognize how their peers had started to participate in class in ways that before were not occurring. Roxy shared that, "I feel our class is working toward a beloved community because their more and new people read out loud in class we have been sharing and being kind to each other. And have been trusting the classroom and the teacher" (Journal entry, November, 2015). Working alongside students toward creating a space where they were mindful of how everyone's actions impacted our learning was important, because this meant that they were beginning to realize that learning in community meant developing trust, love, and the courage to work toward healing and reaching our highest potentials together.

**Awareness of Self and Others**

Students' awareness about how their peers behaved in class was important too, because, to realize that their participation and behavior was shaping the learning environment and being proud of what they had the capacity to create, provided students the imagination to realize that they had the agency to shape their own lives, even within an institution that was often oppressive and dehumanizing. This awareness of self and others was reflected in students' journal entries in response to the building a beloved community. For example, what follows are quotes from students that expressed the ways in which students' actions could support or harm themself or others; and how love and trust were crucial components toward building a beloved community. In the quote below, Lucas shares how students' actions are providing a healthy learning environment:

> I think our class is building a beloved community. I think the class is building trust with other classmates to be able to read out loud. I think this makes them feel valued. We also have been supportive towards them feeling free to doing things their way in class, such as studying and writing papers. I hope that the building of a beloved community continues.

Similarly, Joanne recognized the trust that had been developed in class and the ways in which students were supporting each other impacted students' learning. She expressed:

> I think there is trust in the classroom and that makes it beloved because everyone in the class feels loved and valued, and supported and it helps them not feel embarrassed or scared to do anything in front of the classroom and since they are not embarrassed or scared then they are able to get their work done.

Through her observations of the relationships in our classroom community Pa shared how our actions impacted students' learning, expressing that:

> The students respect each other and the teacher defended students as they read aloud. The atmosphere changed because the pressure, anxiety, and stress was left behind outside this class. This class feels layed back and cool but still strict and an environment where you learn. The students respect, care, and learn from each other and we support students who need help.

Consistent with Pa's experience about how students were impacting one another's learning experiences in the classroom, Daniela asserted that:

> I feel that the students and teachers are making a beloved community for us to work in. I feel like I can do whatever and no one will laugh or make fun of me. Were all cool with each other and it's a joy to come in and learn everyday in here. I feel confident and enjoyed in here.

In a similar way, the environment that Daniela explained in the quote above, supported Alfonso toward trusting the community he was a part of. He expressed how his sense of belonging and trust were a great support for him and agreed that we were building a beloved community:

> Yes, I feel that our class is working toward building a beloved community because their more new people real out loud and answer questions in class. Were working on having everyone read out loud and were almost there. We have been sharing and being kind to each other. And have been trusting the classroom and the teacher.

Lastly, Mike's quote below reflects how students were seeing themselves as successful learners and were loved by their classroom community which allowed them to move away from fear and started to generate hope toward future possibilities:

> Yes because students are more into learning than usual. The students are engaging more in this class than others. The students feel more like a family in here with the teacher. Also, they feel safe and not scared because we have a class that is a family. A beloved community makes students happy and excited whenever they come to your class.

The quotes above show that our classroom community began to be intentionally mindful of their actions and recognized that their actions played a crucial role in not only their own development, but also their peers. As Clare noted, "we have a good vibe throughout the class…our class is also becoming a beloved community because we are forging a family and getting to know each other so well and bonding together to almost create a household out of a classroom"(Journal entry, November, 2015). Mirroring what other students had reflected on in the quotes above, Grace shared how she appreciated that her classmates supported her with her classwork. She knew that her peers would be there for her:

> I really love how we are building a beloved community. Because you know that you always have someone to back you up. If you don't understand something or you need help with some work. You can always go and ask a classmate. And so you know that there is always going to be somebody. (Journal entry, November, 2015)

Additionally, J.R. felt respected and recognized that the ways in which students were treating each other was supporting their development academically and emotionally. He contended that:

> We are all giving each other spaces to grow. We allow people to mess up without being laughed at. We respect people for being thereselves in the classroom. Everyone is comfortable with everyone in the classroom. So this is the way everyone in our community is so beloved. (Journal entry, November, 2015)

Aligned with J.R.'s comment, Carlos also felt that the community and healthy space that was developing was supporting him academically and emotionally. He shared that, "I feel welcomed and wanted and if you feel that then you learn easier. Also, you feel like you want to learn. Its always important to feel wanted and to have a purpose" (Journal entry, November, 2015). This notion of having a purpose and a sense of belonging is a crucial component of moving students from a space of survival, dehumanization, and fear toward community, agency, and care. This was reflected in Rudy's response when he stated that:

> This class helps put me in a better mood and think 'I can't wait to go to that class'. I am not embarrassed to be myself. It makes me focus on work and not worry about how I look and it helps me get good grades. (Journal entry, November, 2015)

Students supporting each other to be themselves and simultaneously learning to honor their own identities, supported students in building a learning environment where their humanity was honored and therefore could build together toward their full potential. Additionally, it was important for me to consistently be mindful of working with my students in ways that supported their humanity and capacity to take responsibility toward cultivating their learning. My intentions then, were to facilitate their learning, and at the same time, know when to provide them the space to challenge themselves, to sit within their own discomfort of learning, and to know that they were responsible for creating, not reproducing knowledge. Sheila explained what learning in the classroom was like for her, stating:

> I think the level of respect is great. For example, we aren't treated like little kids anymore, and when I am showed something then I am free to complete it, it makes me feel better about my learning. Compare to someone going through every step. Its important to me because it gives me emotional courage to be better in my academics and in my life. (Journal entry, December, 2015)

Sheila's reflection is an example of how our classroom community recognized that the cultivation of knowledge (instead of the reproduction of knowledge) honored their humanity and positionality now, as opposed to later. The following quote, although long, presents Karmen's narrative that helped me reflect on my teaching and further explore frameworks that would support humanizing pedagogy this year. Thus, one reason I was increasingly drawn to the notion of beloved communities was because of what a student had shared with me two years before. Karmen had stated to me that:

> The reason I wanted to be in your class was because my brother and sister said that when you explain things you don't just do it on one race and that you make sure everybody is comfortable in your class. I feel very comfortable and it's my favorite class. I feel like I can be myself. And I could tell you try because you're funny and in [teacher's name redacted] class he tries to be funny but he's not and everybody's like (eyes side to side) all serious. In this class, I like it because if you say something there are like no stares and stuff, like here, my mom says I'm creative and stuff, and in here you let me be creative. And people in class are okay with my comments and questions and it used to be like they thought I was weird or a crazy person and now they don't. And in my other classes I'm quiet and serious because I'm not as comfortable. And just that we respect one another and they understand that people have their

> differences. Like [Antonio], when we were in groups and it was me, him, and [Shavo], like he knew I was the crazy type and he knew [Shavo] was kind of odd, and he was in the middle making sure we both were like communicating. And like putting ideas in, like on the rubric I gave him all fives because he did put a lot in. Like I would give an idea, and he would be like yeah, okay, let's do it. And like when we play academic games, and the jokes, and people with their comments I know that means everybody is in their own area and yeah the jokes can go out of here, but I know that when somebody has a sad moment in here, it stays in here. That's how I know we trust each other. And you're good to trust and stuff. (Audio recording, 2013)

When I reflected on what Karmen had shared with me, I began thinking about the classroom practices that we had engaged with, and the ways in which they had supported our classroom community toward establishing trust, working toward healing, and teaching and learning in anti-oppressive ways. I recognized that if I intentionally, and mindfully worked with my students from day one, and named our situatedness together, instead of hoping for it to organically generate after seven months (which is what would often occur in past years) into the school year, that the opportunity to push back on more of the constraints and limitations in our classroom and within ourselves, could be a possibility. While we consistently worked toward healing, building trust, and agency, intersections of grappling with and critically examining the various science-based texts we engaged with occurred simultaneously. In the following section, I will share the ways in which our classroom community negotiated standards-based education and anti-oppressive education simultaneously.

## Findings: Phase Two (mid November to mid January)

The second phase represents the period of time that followed after our classroom community had developed several dispositions that contributed toward the cultivation of relationships. More specifically, we had developed relationships which were rooted in love, trust, respect, agency, and the valuing community which reflected our work toward the building of beloved community. Our development during Phase One provided us the ability to engage with each other and with the curriculum in ways that were rooted in mindfulness and community. What I mean by mindfulness and community is that we were mindful of our individual development, the development of others, and the ways in which we troubled the curriculum and classroom practices. Additionally, because we were consistently working toward trusting, respecting, and loving each other and ourselves, we were able to work in and through spaces of distress together, in order to cultivate knowledge as a community.

Therefore, in the pages ahead I highlight specific classroom experiences that occurred during this time, which reflect the three themes that emerged from the data. These themes included awareness of self and others, critical consciousness, and agency. More specifically, in this section, I share three different lessons that we engaged with that describe our classroom practices and the ways in which we began to define for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we are. I do this by sharing narratives by students and myself that reflect the themes that emerged during this phase, which I named, Cultivating a Critical Consciousness.

### Cultivating a Critical Consciousness

As we engaged with our science texts, and particularly our science textbook, I drew on Kumashiro's (2015) work on anti-oppressive education and common sense thinking

(2008) to ask questions that would have students critically think about, who's missing from the curriculum, and why. I also drew on my students Antonio's (2013) and Jamie's (2013) insights (shared below) to further our critique of the texts, For example, White male scientists dominate our entire science textbook. There are no people of color honored for their contributions, and Rosalind Franklin, the one female scientist that is briefly mentioned, is portrayed as a "helper."

Prior to this study, during the 2012 -13 school year (and when I worked with Antonio and Jamie) I spent a great deal of time weaving into our curriculum, primary sources that acknowledged the contributions of people of color and females. These contributions and insights became a "normal" part of the curriculum. However, what was absent in previous years from the curriculum were the ways in which we troubled the dominant narrative in our science textbook. When talking with Antonio and hearing Jamie's presentation, I began to reflect on what I could do differently as a teacher, in order to support students with challenging dominant narratives. Below I include excerpts of both Antonio's and Jaime's insights that deeply informed and transformed my teaching practices. First, in reflecting on his learning experiences in history class, Antonio shared:

> When we're reading about black people or my people, I get pissed and just want to walk out of class. It's always about how some rich white guy runs everything and its always told by the white guy. And I don't feel like I can say anything about it in class. Like sometimes I don't even want to pay attention and I want to close my book and put it under the chair and just want to skip that part and all that. Usually what they are saying isn't true. My grandma has pretty much told me about what has happened in her past and my grandpas past and that's pretty much it. And I feel like my people are

> left out way more than whites and even more than black people. (Audio recording, 2013)

In a similar way, Jaime when presenting alongside several of his classmates at the California Teachers Association Conference on March 2, 2013[4], stated that:

> In history class, we are studying about the Aztecs and Mayans and I feel like my people are left out and we aren't being represented accurately. In my history class, they only talk about who conquered us and what they found. Also, they don't give more information about people of color. The textbooks just seem to focus on the white race and they aren't giving people of color credit for what they have created. (Video recording, March, 2013)

In reflecting on what Antonio and Jamie asserted, I realized that intentionally using our textbook in critical ways would support students in gaining the tools to trouble and push back on dehumanizing text and practices in even greater capacities. The following year, and this year, I had the students engage with our textbook more than before. I recognized that instead of "protecting" them from marginalizing text or the dominant narrative, by not reading the textbook as often; I needed to support them in deconstructing, critiquing, and developing new ways to cultivate knowledge and discourse that reflected what students were naming and experiencing.

This year, as we read from the science textbook and the bombardment of White male contributions emerged, students began to name who was missing from the curriculum. For example, during the cell processes unit, students were introduced to the cell theory, which highlighted three White male scientists named Virchow, Schleiden, and Schwann for their

[4] In March 2013, I along with another teacher from a different school presented alongside our students at the California Teachers Association Conference. This was our first time presenting together as a group. See Phase Three for a deeper discussion of this presentation.

contributions toward the development of the cell theory. What follows is a snapshot of our class engaging in this type of critique.

When we read about the cell theory and the contributors to the theory, I asked students, "Who is missing from this story and why?" Four students raised their hands and shared who they thought was missing from the story and/or why. A few students nodded as one student voiced that females were missing and recalled a story I had shared about women and reproduction, and the false scientific correlation between learning and infertility. Additionally, during our discussion, students also named that a legacy of institutional barriers and sexist and racist polices impacted and continue to shape common sense thinking and practices, today.

After our class discussion, I asked students to reflect on our discussion and Luis stated in his journal entry that, "Sometimes I look at my textbook different because only white males are in it when I feel like no matter what gender/race you can do what you want for the world and get honored for it. Not just one gender or race" (November 2015). Similarly, Rayna stated that, "I really think the text books should talk about other races and women too, because it is important that it's not all about white people or just males. It's not like a woman or a person of a different race didn't come up with any of the things were learning about in our school textbooks" (Journal entry, November, 2015).

When I asked students "why are people of color or women missing from our textbook" (Video recording, November 2015), Alise shared that, "because women weren't allowed to go to college" (Video recording, November 2015) and during the same class discussion, Javier stated that, "people of color didn't have the right" (Video recording, November 2015). Again, visible tension and discomfort developed in the classroom wherein

some students eyes became wider, some looked down, several looked around, several seemed un-phased, two developed redness in their face and total silence filled the room (Video recording, November, 2015), I asked students to reflect on the tensions that had transpired. Tanya shared what naming oppression in the classroom was like for her, stating that, "The more we talk about it, the weirder it gets…but at the same time, it makes us more comfortable when we get around each other" (Video recording, November 2015). Additionally, Marcos stated in his journal entry that talking about institutional racism, "made me feel worried, but then I felt relieved" (November 2015). The cultivation of knowledge and critical consciousness through the critical analysis of marginalizing text, supported students in recognizing that racist and sexist practices were rooted in institutionalized systems of oppression and began to cultivate discourse that pushed back on the dominant narrative.

These ongoing discussions and reflections situated in spaces of distress continued to develop throughout the school year as we explored and learned from contributions by oppressed communities and the ways in which their contributions often went unnoticed or were silenced in textbooks – while the dominant cultural discourse was normalized by means of our textbook. Another example of how we troubled the dominant narrative portrayed in our textbook during the cell processes unit was when we read about the structure of the DNA double helix and the scientists that contributed toward identifying its structure and function. In our science textbook by Pearson (2008), the authors wrote:

> Before scientists could understand how DNA replicates, they had to know its structure. In 1952, Rosalind Franklin used an X-ray method to photograph DNA

> molecules. Her photographs helped James Watson and Francis Crick figure out the structure of DNA. (p. 135)

In order to disrupt the narrative in our textbook, students watched a movie titled, *Secret of Photo 51* (Nova, 2003) that shared Rosalind Franklin's story from a different lens which honored her and her contributions. After students viewed the movie, I asked them to reflect on two questions in the form of a journal entry (November, 2015). The two questions were, "After viewing the movie *Secret of Photo 51*, in what ways did Rosalind Franklin experience injustice in relationship to her gender and her contributions to science?" and "How is this story different from the story our textbook shares about Rosalind Franklin and her contributions to science (textbook pg. 135)?"

Below are five reflections from different students in response to the first question I posed. Susie shared the ways in which Rosalind Franklin went unnoticed, and in her analysis she posited that:

> Rosalind Franklin experienced injustice by not being allowed into rooms, not being taken serious, her work being stolen, and when the big breakthrough of DNA occurred, she was left unnoticed. When one of the men who wrote a book on DNA, after she died, didn't even mention her outstanding contribution.

Additionally, Josh recognized that because Rosalind was a female, her contributions were not honored. Josh posited that:

> Rosalind was mistreated because not many women were in science. She was cheated out of her hard work and never received full credit because she was a female. The men gave her disrespectful nicknames. She was a girl and she was given no credit. As

> a woman she was laughed upon for being a female scientist. Watson and Crick would have never done it. She was their collaborator and they abused her.

Xiong expressed concern about the deceptiveness and lack of respect for Rosalind. She felt that this was solely based on the fact that she was a female. Also, she expressed concern that the male scientists benefited from their privileged positionality, stating:

> Rosalind Franklin's data was used without her knowing. They gained success with someone elses work. They took advantage of the fact that she was a woman and know that they could do it. They treated her like she didn't matter because of her gender. She was not welcomed in science because she was a woman. Rosalind Franklin died not knowing that Watson and Crick used her work.

Similar to Xiong's realization about the treatment of Rosalind based on her gender, Jason also asserted that the way she was treated was a form of injustice, asserting:

> Rosalind Franklin experienced injustice because she was a female. She was not looked at as an equal, even though she was very smart. People thought she couldn't do it because she was a lady and men thought we were so smart but it seems the lady was actually smarter and figured it out. Also, she had to go to an all girl school until she got to go to a special science school.

Lastly, Natalie observed that Rosalind was not conforming to gender roles, and concluded that:

> She experienced a lot of injustice from her co-workers like Crick told her that she needs to wear make-up and skirts because she is a girl/lady/woman. Also photo 51 was the main factor in figuring out the structure of DNA and photo 51 was her

> picture. When Watson and Crick stole her photo and used it they didn't even mention her name or hard work.

In response to the second question, "How is this story different from the story our textbook shares about Rosalind Franklin and her contributions to science (textbook pg. 135)?" Cory troubled the dominant narrative in our textbook, stating, "This story is different from the one in our textbook because in our book it says that Rosalind 'helped' when in reality Rosalind discovered everything." Additionally, Sherry held a firm stance and acknowledged that the book stated that Rosalind "helped" Watson and Crick, whereas Sherry posited the ways in which she recognized Franklin's contribution as a significant scientific breakthrough asserting:

> All the book says is that her work helped James and Francis. But what she really did was make a huge scientific breakthrew in the structure of DNA. If it wasn't for her then people today wouldn't know what DNA is, and they really didn't come up with the DNA, Rosalind Franklin did. In the book, it says that Watson and Crick came up with the DNA but ROSALIND FRANKLIN really came up with it.

Similar to Sherry's quote above, J.R. also troubled the way in which the book mentioned Franklin role as a 'helper' expressing that:

> The film tells how Rosalind made the most important discoveries in uncovering DNA and the book just says she 'helped' Watson and Crick. The textbook is embarrassing, because they didn't honor women making incredible discoveries even before men. Also, the textbook never mentioned her harsh working conditions and gives her little credit.

Aligned with J.R.s sentiments, Naomi asserted that Rosalind should have been honored for her contributions and also highlights Rosalind's courage and strength:

> The story differs from our textbook because it shows Rosalind did nearly all of the findings of DNA. It tells about her determination and perserverance in creating photo 51, or the sharpest DNA image. Watson and Crick took credit for her data and work. The two men built off of her work, so Rosalind Franklin should have been recognized for her work.

Lastly, Perry contented that it was important to read the textbook critically and acknowledged Franklin's contribution, stating:

> The book makes it all nice. But her ideas were stolen. Her ideas were stolen by Watson and Crick. This makes me not trust the textbook. In the text book they barely even mentioned her name, which is unfair because she did 90% of the work.

By sharing a different lens with students, they began to "believe" and "see" that the contributions of oppressed communities were either falsely represented, missing from the curriculum, and/or intentionally highlighted White males. Students began to recognize in more meaningful ways that our textbook, and our curriculum held partial truths and uncertainties that they, as cultivators of knowledge, had a responsibility to build upon, transform, trouble, and/ or dismantle. For example, Gabriella during our classroom discussion which occurred the following day after students had seen the movie, *Secret of Photo 51*, expressed her concern, and questioned her access to knowledge from different perspectives, stating, "Why haven't they told us about this. Why are we just learning about it now?" (Video recording, November, 2015). During the same conversation, Gina, with her

eyebrows squeezed together shared, “We need to do something about this, it’s not right” (Video recording, November, 2015).

Four days after our class discussion mentioned above, we had completed the cell processes unit and had transitioned into the genetics unit. We spent several weeks learning about our traits, how genes were passed down from parents to offspring, and engaged with the fundamental concepts as they related to genetic engineering, reproduction, and prepared ourselves for our first NGSS aligned unit. I was excited about negotiating anti-oppressive education and troubling the ways in which we (students and teachers) were directed to teach and learn, by working alongside my students to cultivate a curricular unit that troubled, pushed back on, and transformed the top-down approach.

Therefore, while we continued to critically examine marginalizing and dehumanizing texts, we transitioned into our first NGSS aligned unit on genetics. Two of the topics that students explored within this unit included, Genetics, Race, and Institutional Racism and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). Students’ investigations during both of these methodological processes (both units were designed starting with a research question) were to examine the personal, social, economic, and political impacts of both respectively, and also investigate the scientific validity that these topics held. Both lessons were rooted in gaining insight about institutional racism, common sense thinking, and access and equity, in addition to learning standards-based genetics concepts. In order for students to critique the dominant narrative, it required them gaining an in-depth understanding of the scientific concepts that went beyond the science standards we were required to teach and learn.

In the pages ahead, I share narratives from our classroom community that contributed to three of the emergent themes. As mentioned previously, the themes that are included in

this phase are cultivation of knowledge, cultivation of relationships, and critical consciousness. I start by sharing the ways in which we engaged with the Genetics, Race, and Institutional Racism unit, followed by a brief description of GMOs project, which moved our classroom community from naming, toward action and change which I share in the third phase, Engaging with Participatory Action Research.

**Genetics, race, and institutional racism project.** We began the Genetics, Race, and Institutional Racism project by defining the meaning of race as a class. Students were asked to respond to the statement, "Based on your prior experience and understandings, define the meaning of race to the best of your ability." After students had some time to write down their responses, they participated in a pair-share with enough time allotted for each student to share their response with a community member. After the pair-share, we defined race as a class. Students voiced their insights and I wrote them on the board. After all students' responses were voiced and written on the board, we combined all of their statements and then edited their contributions into a smooth flowing statement. Each class period's contributions of how they initially defined race, prior to immersing ourselves into the project is listed below:

- Period Two:

  "Race is the differences between us as humans. It's typically decided by skin color, culture, origin, religion, language, heritage, country, nation, and beliefs."

- Period Three:

  "Our current definition of race is based on different peoples' skin color, physical characteristics, language, nationality, ancestry, and religion."

- Period Four:

"Race is based on human beings' skin color, religion, ancestry, nationality, culture, and physical characteristics."

- Period Five:

  "Race is based on human beings' skin color, religion, physical characteristics, culture, traits, where you are born, and language."

- Period Six:

  "The meaning of race for human beings is based on skin color, physical characteristics, language, and eye shape."

After we defined race as a class, I introduced students to our research question. Our research question was, "Is race based on genetic research or is race a social construct (invented by people)?" I explained both concepts to students and students then hypothesized whether "race is a social construct" or "race is based on genetic research." Once students wrote down their hypothesis, we participated in four different activities during a two-week span that would support our classroom community in determining if their individual hypothesis were correct.[5] We explored the online companion website for the documentary about race (*Race—The Power of an Illusion. What is race?*), on PBS.org (California Newsreel, 2003) and critically examined texts about the eugenics movement, and had three class discussions on race and racism. At the end of this lesson, students were asked if their hypothesis was correct, and were also asked to write a concluding statement about why their response was correct or not. Upon coding the data (class work, December 2015), 94% of students asserted that race was a social construct. The following quotes from Martin, Tina, Raul, and Carly reflect the

[5] I use this structure intentionally. This structure of developing a hypothesis, and exploring race and racism during the genetics unit is an exemplar of the ways in which to negotiate with constricting standards-based curriculum.

majority of the student responses:

Martin: “Race is a social construct with no scientific validity behind it at all.”

Tina: “Race is based on a social construct and not genetic research.”

Raul: “Race is based on social construct because race is made up by people.”

Carly: “Race is a social construct created for economy to place people on a different scale of different types of wealth and equallity.”

Since a large number of students recognized that race was a social construct, their understandings supported us in moving toward different curricular practices in relationship to race and racism with a shared understanding to build from. Below, I share students’ responses from the different activities we engaged with including, 1) students’ responses from their class work, 2) students’ survey responses (students took a survey before and after this project in relationship to race and racism) and, 3) students’ journal entries.

I start by highlighting several students’ responses (student work, December 2015) in regards to the question, “Do you feel that the activities we engaged with in class about race and racism are accurate/true? Please provide an example to support your stance.” Below I share four categories supported by student responses that reflect the ways in which our classroom community pushed back on or troubled the dominant narrative. Students’ quotes that speak to each category are listed directly below each category. Their self-identified race(s) are also included in parenthesis to provide greater insight into the meanings behind their quotes:

1) Believing People of Color

- “It’s accurate because I believe their stories.” (white)

- "Yes, I do because these are real people telling their stories and experiences." (white)

2) Acknowledging Institutional Racism

- "I think racism is true because over the years, the government has really helped white families more than others." (white)
- "I feel the activities are true because the federal government helped white people achieve the 'American Dream'. So for other races it was difficult to buy homes and have mass wealth." (white)
- "Our government is cruel to immigrants from all different places." (Latino)
- "True Where you live in the US isn't just a matter of preference its also about your future." (Latino)
- "I think it's true because it's all about providing the future for whites on the backs of people of color." (Latino)

3) Lived Experience with Racism

- "Yes I do feel its all true because a lot of this stuff happens today in every day life." (Latina)
- "When you're white things flow more easily. SO much stuff people of color realize is happening to them is overlooked by the general public." (black)

The students' quotes above show the ways in which they acknowledged institutional racism, and how white students believed the stories and experiences of people of color. Additionally, students recognized the ways in which the legacy of racism in the U.S. continues to shape the lived experiences of people of color today and consequently benefit white folks.

Students also responded to the statement, "Please share one new form of information that you learned from one or more of the activities you participated in (class conversations, PBS website, articles)." Below are four categories that reflect students' understandings of how their engagement with activities on race and racism and/or classroom conversations on race and racism shaped their learning:

1) Institutional Racism/White Privilege

- "That immigration laws are terrible and you could be separated from your family." (white)
- "I learned that whites have benefited from exclusionary laws and policies while other groups were restricted from full participation in American society." (Latino)
- "That some people don't get homes because of their race." (Latina)
- "I learned that people don't like to talk about race and how slavery was worse than I thought and certain stuff like that I also learned that some things are still segregated I also learned that some white people don't want to give up their opportunities." (white)
- "That white people get to have more freedom then people of color." (Latino)
- "I understand that white men had/have more power." (Asian)
- "I learned that even laws can be racist." (white)
- "The opportunities you have/ money you make often will depend on your race." (Latina).
- "I learned that race hasn't been defined the same way as it used to. The white community has been benefited for centuries on politics and laws." (white)

- "I learned that race it is hard to talk about because we know that we are the ones that caused slavery and we are now benefiting from it." (white)

Students' quotes in the category Institutional Racism/White Privilege, shared the ways in which institutional racism was legitimized with racist policies and laws rooted in the false notions of scientific validity. They acknowledged that hierarchies are constructed and normalized to benefit white people and uphold a U.S. economic system driven by racialized laws and practices.

In the category Horizontal Violence below, students recognized the ways in which institutional racism (vertical) plays out horizontally. In other words, students reflected on the ways on which people react or behave in relationship to each other as a consequence of institutional racism.

2) Horizontal Violence

- "Some people are abused because based on how they look others don't care because race doesn't efect them." (Latina & black)
- "One thing I learned was that many people don't care about anyone's feelings but the whites." (Asian)
- "I learned that many whites underestimate other races by not giving them rites and pretty much closing them out of life." (white & Latina)
- "I learned that sometimes people make assumptions, that aren't true, and they don't even know." (white)
- "If you are white you are treated better in America then if you are (black, Latino, etc.)." (black)

- "How people think your dangerous or have crazy ideas in their head if your Mexican." (Latino)
- "People don't want to talk about racism and feel guilty about it when they should be feeling anger." (Latino)
- "People of different races get noticed by cops before white people do." (white)

Students began to understand that situating themselves in discomfort supported the work toward racial justice and acknowledged that people of color have been engaged in the struggle toward social justice, that has yet to become a reality.

3) Transformation

- "One new understanding for me is that people of color never excepted that they were unequal and kept fighting for what they thought was right." (white)
- "Americans of many races must come together and get in uncomfortable position for racism to stop." (white)

Additionally, what follows below highlights the ways in which students recognized that racism is not a "thing of the past" and acknowledged that the meaning of race has changed over time, and will continue to change:

4) Awareness of Colorblindness

- "I learned that still to this day no one is equal." (Asian & white)
- "I learned people are still racist in this country and that people think that America is a country for white people." (Latina)
- "Ignoring races, or the term 'colorblind' isn't a good thing because racism won't stop until there is no more colorblind." (white)

- "Racism is a bigger problem than I thought." (white)
- "That race wasn't always defined the same and it keeps changing when the years go by." (Asian)
- "People are try for equality, but never really achieved it." (white)
- "I learned that it is better to be wrong and admit it and do something about it, rather than be racist." (Asian).

Lastly, our classroom community's responses and further inquiries below are examples of the ways in which students had named the dominant narrative, examined institutional racism vertically, and consequently reflected on the ways in which people of color experienced racial injustice vertically. I share students' self-identified race(s) because students' responses were based on their prior understandings, which were rooted in the ways in which they experienced the world and therefore cultivated their understandings of race and racism in different ways. Furthermore, the dataset reflected responses from multiple races and shows the ways in which our classroom community cultivated critical consciousness in a multi-racial space, in different ways, and while situated in a space of distress. Below I share students' responses to the statement, "Write down questions you have about race or racism now that we have completed our activities." In the quotes below, students' inquiries reflect the ways in which they recognized that social, political, and economic structures and /or thinking were what need to be changed:

- "What would happen if white people were the ones enslaved?" (white)
- "What is there to gain except for money for making different races?" (Asian and White)
- "What would happen if black people made the same amount of money as white?"

(white)

- "Why do some dehumanize people of color? Or why do white people try to hide what they did back then?" (Latino)
- "Why white people act like people of color don't have feelings? Why people think it's okay to treat one another horribly?" (Latina)
- "What will we think of race in 20 years?" (Latina)
- "Is racism a problem in other countries?" (Latina)
- "When will it stop? When will there be more races? Why don't blacks get what Native Americans do?" (Asian)
- "When will cops stop treating black people like criminals? What can we do about it?
- "Why do white people make stereotypes? What is wrong with white people?" (white)
- "Why do white people think they are better than us?" (black)
- "Why are whites taking most of the money and resources still?" (Latino)
- "Why don't more people step up to help the problem? If people want to make a change why don't they? (white)
- "Why can't we share everything now? (And) Can we stop racism?" (white)
- "Why don't other people think that maybe white people are also being affected by racism? What changes can we make to prevent racism?" (white)

When talking about race and racism in a class where 60% of students are white and 40% of students are students of color, tension and discomfort fill the space. Although in many ways before engaging with this project we had developed love, trust, and respect as a classroom

community, at the root of a beloved community is racial and social justice. In essence, we cannot hide the fact that we can work in constricting spaces that are simultaneously multi-racial, while not naming how our differing positionalities and current institutional constraints play a role in our development. Therefore, in building a beloved community, gaining insight into how we worked in and through spaces of distress, reflects the ways in which our classroom community worked toward building a beloved community. For example, situating ourselves in spaces of distress was precisely for the purposes of contributing toward racial and social justice. What I mean is, by developing trust, love and respect, to a degree, but not fully (due to oppression), but just enough to be able to move in and out of spaces of distress together, supported our classroom community to engage collectively in confronting oppression. Thus, students, in response to the Genetics Survey Two question, "Did talking about race and racism in class make you feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?" expressed what the experience was like for them. Again, due to the brief, yet insightful responses by students, I have shared their responses in a bulleted format organized into five categories below: White guilt, Not wanting to sound racist, Race talk is painful, Race talk makes me uneasy, and Race and racism aren't talked about (Genetics survey two, December 2016):

1) White guilt

- "Yes because it made it sound like all different races got treated badly and it made it sound like all white people are bad."
- "Yes, because they were blaming all white people for racism."

2) Not wanting to sound racist

- "Yes, because some people can be really sensitive about this and you could say one little thing wrong and they could get really mad."

- "A little, because I didn't want to say anything racist on accident."

3) Race talk is painful

- "Yeah I felt really uncomfortable because people were/are getting treated bad. It made me feel sad because we were sad in class."
- "Yes, because it's just not comfortable talking about race. It's painful."
- "Yes, I am called racial slurs and names that make me uncomfortable when I think about it."

4) Race talk makes me uneasy

- "Yes. Kind of because there are different races here in this class."
- "Yes, I don't know why, but it made me feel uneasy."
- "It kind of made me feel a little bit uncomfortable because it felt really different when we were talking about race."

5) Race and racism aren't talked about

- "It made me feel weird because I never talk about it."
- "A little bit, because it is not a topic that is talked about often."
- "Yes because I never talked about stuff like this before."
- "So–so, talking about race is not a thing that people talk about everyday, but I wasn't wanting it to end."

Not only do the students' responses above reflect their discomfort during our class discussions on race and our situatedness at the moment, but all of the responses shared above also came from students that stated in the same survey (this question was asked right after the question they responded to above), "Did you feel it was important to talk about race or racism in class? Why or why not?" They all shared that they felt it was important to talk

about race or racism in class even though it caused them pain, discomfort, sadness, and/or anger.

**GMOs project.** Once we had completed the Genetics, Race, and Institutional Racism project, we transitioned into the GMOs project. During this unit we read articles about GMOs, watched video clips and had two classroom discussions about the ways in which the U.S., India, and Mexico were impacted by Monsanto and GMOs, and accessed online resources such as, PBS – Harvest of Fear. We also read articles about genetic engineering and plant reproduction that were aligned with the current science-standards and also NGSS, yet troubled them simultaneously. Additionally, we engaged in two laboratory experiments, which included the Organic vs. GMO Experiment and Taste-test Lab.

Throughout this project, students participated in the activities mentioned above while exploring the research question, "How can we as environmental scientists contribute to the GMO debate and provide different ideas that society may embrace?" My intentions behind this question had several purposes. One, I wanted students to begin seeing themselves as "environmental scientists." In this sense, students would begin to recognize that they had the brilliance and knowledge to use their knowledge now, as opposed to later. For example, instead of students understanding the purpose of schooling as a means to an end. I wanted to hold a space alongside them wherein their knowledge, their humanity, and their actions were honored now, as opposed to later. Maya, approached me a week into the GMOs project and shared with me her realization. She excitedly, with a huge smile on her face said, "Ms. Adamian, when I was in elementary school, I wanted to be a scientist. I'm so happy now, because I actually get to be one" (Field notes, December, 2015).

My second purpose was for students to recognize the partiality of knowledge, and the ways in which we could contribute toward its development. By framing the question as, "How can we as environmental scientists contribute to the GMO debate and provide different ideas that society may embrace?" it provided students a workspace, to not only contribute new knowledge, but also to recognize that the story was partial and held uncertainties. Additionally, this question was designed to provide students an example of a research question that was not seeking an immediate answer, nor was one available. In this sense, I wanted students to become familiar with participating in a research process that in some ways would later support them and that they could draw from, when they engaged with participatory action research (which I had anticipated starting with them similar to prior years), in March. Lastly, this question supported us in constructing a curricular unit ourselves, and thus began constructing our own narrative, as opposed to solely critiquing the dominant narrative. In other words, this question opened up the possibilities to bring in primary sources beyond the textbook, seek insight from each other, and develop community-based knowledge by structuring the question to include "we" opposed to "I." My intentions for the culminating activity for this project was to engage students in a debate using the "Fish Bowl" strategy, titled, "GMOs vs. Organic." However, after the debate, what transpired from the GMOs project was unexpected. Below, I share how this lesson became the catalyst for the participatory action research project students engaged with in the final phase of our process together, which I named, Engaging with Participatory Action Research.

**Findings: Phase Three (mid December to early April)**

As we were nearing the end of the GMOs project, our classroom community voiced their concerns in relationship to access to healthy and organic foods, health education, and

also questioned the food served in our school cafeteria. It was at this time (December), that I recognized that what was required of me, was to introduce participatory action research (PAR) to our classroom community. Therefore, Phase Three overlaps the tail end of Phase Two, because we began developing our PAR problem statement and research question(s) while we were still involved with the GMOs project. I named Phase Three, Engaging with Participatory Action Research (PAR). The themes that emerged during this phase included cultivating knowledge, cultivating relationships, and agency.

In the pages ahead, I share our classroom community's engagement with PAR. I start by briefly revisiting the ways in which the GMOs project inspired our classroom community to engage with PAR in a standards-based science classroom, leading to a discussion about each class period's problem statement and research question(s). More specifically, I highlight the ways in which students cultivated knowledge by problematizing their current situatedness. I also illustrate our classroom community's reflections that accentuated teacher and students and student and student relationships rooted in contradictions, agency, community, and possibility. I conclude by briefly highlighting each class period's PAR project, and then focus in great detail on period four's PAR project in order to provide insight into the ways in which our classroom community created and transformed schooling practices at our school site rooted in love, hope, agency, and care.

**Engaging with Participatory Action Research**

The GMOs project was the catalyst for naming, problematizing, and transforming the toxic practices at our school site. In essence, in every class period, emotions ran high as a result of our distaste for Monsanto, processed foods, and the lack of access to health education (Student work, November, 2015; Video recordings, December, 2015). Video

recording during the month of December illustrated students' passion and concern for several problems that they had identified. Students voiced these concerns throughout the GMOs project, which subsequently contributed toward their development of their PAR problem statement and research question(s), which I consistently tired to mindfully facilitate by troubling my positionality.

More specifically, I introduced the process of PAR to our classroom community by explaining to students the ways in which PAR was similar to the scientific method (but we were flipping the script) and the ways in which it was very different[6]. Drawing from their previous knowledge and insights from the GMOs unit that students had cultivated, every class period named and agreed upon a problem they wanted to explore. Near the end of the first semester, each class period had developed their problem statement and research question(s). What follows are exemplars of students' experiences in the development of their problem statement and the ways in which I worked alongside them with the intentions of supporting their work, but in essence, being mindful of the contradictory nature of conducting PAR in a public school classroom (e.g. teacher's positionality, students' positionalities, and our situatedness within an institution rooted in neoliberal and hegemonic thinking and practices). I asked students to respond to the question, "Did your teacher influence or impact the development of your PAR problem statement in any way? Please explain and give example."

Cultivating Relationships

In their journal entries (January, 2016), students expressed how they experienced the process alongside me. These reflections from students not only served as insight toward this

[6] Negotiating with standard-based curriculum and practices requires consistently seeking ways to push back on constricting and monitored curricular practices in artful/creative ways.

study, but also supported me in the ways in which I continued to work with them on their PAR project. For example, Camilla shared the ways in which my facilitation impacted her, by stating, "Yes, but not in a bad way. By editing our sentences this helped me improve my writing skills and knowledge. I also think this editing technique will help me in the future on writing assignments." Additionally, Sherry recognized that in some ways I held a position of power that I could use to facilitate a space that either honored them or dehumanized them, she asserted that:

> You influenced us on our PAR problem, you let us talk…Say what we thought we needed. You helped us improve the statements we said and also some voting. Us students appreciate how you let us think, speak, and use our own grammar statement! Thanks for the influence.

The above quotes show that even though as I teacher I engaged in a liberating pedagogy, many of my students still saw me as an authority figure in the classroom. In other words, power, my power, was very much felt in the classroom. My hope was to utilize my authority on the side of freedom, and acknowledge that hegemonic structures and ideologies would continue to shape our relationships since we were developing our relationships in an institutional setting rooted in a legacy of hegemonic thinking and practices. The students' quotes that follow, are exemplars of how students used words such as, "helped," "let," and "allowed," when referencing my facilitation. At the same time, their responses reflect how we troubled this space of distress, in that students recognized how we attempted to navigate this contradictory space together. In this sense, the students' quotes are rooted in contradictions, wherein they name the liberatory spaces that we were attempting to cultivate, while situated within a hegemonic context. For example, Anna shared that, "Yes, you

impacted our PAR problem in a good way. You *allowed* us to come up with everything without intervining with the actual ideas." Similarly, Alexa contended that:

> You (my teacher) did not influence or impact the development of our PAR problem statement in any way. One way that you didn't is you *let me and my classmates* give our own ideas/statement without you saying that you think we should change it to something completely different that what we said.

Similar to the above quotes where students used words such as "let" and "allowed" Marquis acknowledge the facilitation of collaboration while simultaneously naming that I "let" it happen, asserting that:

> Yes, you influenced the development of our PAR prob statement. You influenced it by supporting us in our ideas. For example, when someone had an idea, you *let* them share it. Then, you helped us refine all the ideas so they fit together.

In contrast to the students' reflections above, what follows are exemplars of some students' quotes wherein they felt supported in the cultivation of their problem statement as a process that honored them while simultaneously supporting their development. In other words, the reflections below are absent of words such as "allowing" or "letting" students speak or share their ideas. For example, Gabriella acknowledged that the development of their problem statement was rooted in students' cultivating the problem statement. She asserted that:

> No I don't think that you impacted our problem statement because the students came up with all the ideas and the students also helped to rephrase the sentences that they came up with so that they would be better.

Aligned with Gabriella's assertion, Nico reflected on the process of developing the PAR problem statement and recognized the process as a space that inspired his own cultivation of his ideas:

> As my teacher you definetly influenced me to come up with my own ideas. In all honesty ideas that I thought I could ever imagine. Sometimes I think to the point that people would say 'your thinking to hard.'

Lastly, Victoria recognized that the support and facilitation she was experiencing was grounded in experience, and more about my acknowledgment of students' voices as "receiving," rather than "allowing," she contented that:

> I do think that you influenced our PAR problem statement, but only in a positive way. You always took what the students said. You also gave us a very helpful new lens coming from all of your experience in the real world. I believe this supported the students and our PAR statement became stronger.

The students' responses above show the ways in which they recognized my facilitation of PAR alongside them in several ways. They acknowledged my 1) attempts to generate a humanizing process rooted in honoring their voices, 2) experience as a contributing factor that supported them logistically, while not intervening/influencing their ideas, and 3) authority as their teacher that held a position of power that would not be dissolved regardless of my attempts to hold space with them as a "co-researcher."

What follows are all five period's final problem statements (class work, December 2016) and research question(s) which they revisited and revised with my support throughout the project. Several dispositions are also reflected within their problem statements and research questions. In the statements below, students exhibited the ways in which that they

had: committed themselves toward being of service to their school community and beyond; embraced self-determination and agency; cultivated passion and purpose; and showed concern beyond their individual needs, by caring about people beyond their classroom community.

**Cultivating Knowledge**

Each class period's problem statement and research question(s) are outlined below:

Period Two

Problem Statement:

> "There are not enough low calorie food options on our campus, causing us to not eat or eat too much. Either way, we have limited options of low calorie foods. Therefore, this results in a harmful effect on our bodies, which leads to obesity. Many of us experience a lack of nutrients by not being offered enough low calorie healthy foods. Lastly, offering the food we have now is a wasteful act of spending because the cafeteria food is processed, not appealing, tasteless, and rotten."

Research Question:

> "In what ways can we as a 7th grade science class provide healthy food options so that students don't have to eat cafeteria food that is processed, tasteless, not appealing, and rotten?"

Period Three

Problem Statement:

> "We are lacking the knowledge about being healthy because our school is not providing us information on nutrition. Students are usually eating junk food instead of healthy food. For example, students are throwing away healthier options and eating

the unhealthy food. Lastly, some students pack their lunches using unhealthy options."

Research Questions:

"1) In what ways can we as student researchers provide our peers access to the knowledge on healthier food options?"

"2) How can we provide our peers access to the knowledge about being or becoming healthy about nutrition and health?"

Period Four

Problem Statement:

"There are three big reasons why we feel that our school needs a gardening elective. There are currently no electives that benefit the school financially, esthetically, or morally. First of all, there are no gardening electives for students to support our school with fresh organic foods, while receiving an education at the same time. Also, we don't really have any color or variety on our campus, and nobody to fix that problem. Furthermore, those that may want to grow their own food, there are really no options. Sadly, we don't have fresh natural foods for the school, a proper education on plants, and an elective that would keep our school's students active while making our school a much healthier place."

Research Question:

"In what ways can we provide students at Bidwell a learning experience on how to grow their food, a proper education on plants, and provide fresh natural food for our school?"

Period Five

Problem Statement:

"Since Bidwell Junior High does not inform us about the unhealthy food that is served, we may suffer from the consequences. Some of these consequences include obesity, diabetes, hunger, and illness. Unfortunately, our school's cafeteria does not have any nutrition facts displayed for students to make an informed decision about their food choices. As a result, kids that are trying to be healthy are unable to succeed."

Research Question:

"In what ways can we as participatory action researchers solve the problem that our school does not provide nutritional facts for students to make informed decisions about what they are consuming?"

Period Six

Problem Statement:

"Most of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is made of plastic waste including plastic water bottles. Plastic water bottles can harm plants and animals because they can pollute the environment. At our school we are contributing to pollution and the Pacific Garbage Patch by selling plastic water bottles. Using a single plastic water bottle may not seem big, but the long-term effects on the environment are huge."

Research Question:

"In what ways can we as Bidwell Pioneers contribute to minimizing the amount of plastic water bottles used on campus that are only adding to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch?"

In addition to the dispositions that were reflected in each class period's problem statement and research questions above; our classroom community's problem statements and research questions also demonstrated the ways in which students cultivated knowledge and acknowledged themselves as researchers. For example, period three identified themselves as, "student researchers" in their research question. Similarly, period five named themselves as, "participatory action researchers." More specifically, Reese reflected on her identity, and shared that, "Learning about science and going to the computer room and doing diagrams and labs also working with team mates makes me feel like a scientist" (Journal entry, January, 2016). Also, Carly defined herself in a similar way, stating, "I started to feel like a scientist when we first started with the presentations [September]. Also, when we wrote our analyses about what people said about the cafeteria food" (Journal entry, March, 2016). Similar to the students' quotes above, the following student narrative's reflected the ways in which the PAR process supported students in both defining themselves as scientists in addition to their sense of agency. However, the contradictory nature of my facilitation is also highlighted in Andre's narrative below. Andre asserted in his journal entry (March, 2016) that:

> I feel I have agency in this class environment. Ms. Adamian and us made a very comfortable class. While I was engaging in the PAR program it helped me develop my agency, because Ms. Adamian *let* us do our own work. As a student I have had many teachers that just never let go, they are always right on top of you while you are working. In this class that never happens, which I enjoy. Ms. Adamian really *lets us* do our own work and our own research. She *helps* when we need it, but otherwise she just *let's us* be scientists.

Similar to Andre, Xavier acknowledged his agency and simultaneously asserted that he was a researcher/scientist, stating:

> I didn't realize my agency before I came in this class. Ever since I was in this class I have felt and noticed that more and more people are being helpful and kind to people no matter what. And as a co-researcher it helped my agency grow a little. It grew a little by when we are in our groups we know who we can trust and will do there work, but we also know who could use a little help with there work. It developed my agency in realizing that I am a scientist and can use my agency because I figured out how I can help people and myself.

Students also named the ways in which their schooling experiences contradicted what they recognized they had the right to have access to. For example, period five stated in their problem statement that:

> Since Bidwell Junior High does not inform us about the unhealthy food that is served, we may suffer from the consequences. Some of these consequences include obesity, diabetes, hunger, and illness. Unfortunately, our school's cafeteria does not have any nutrition facts displayed for students to make an informed decision about their food choices.

Students had recognized the ways in which they lacked access to healthy food and information on nutrition that they had a right to, in order to, "make an informed decision about their food choices."

Furthermore, period six recognized the ways in which schooling practices at the local level were contributing toward a larger global crisis, positing in their problem statement that, "At our school we are contributing to pollution and the Pacific Garbage Patch by selling

plastic water bottles. Using a single plastic water bottle may not seem big, but the long-term effects on the environment are huge." The narrative and students' work illustrated above reflected the ways in which students had named their world (Freire, 1970), and in turn cultivated the knowledge and dispositions that worked to transform the toxic practices at our school site. In the pages ahead, I share how we further engaged with PAR in a science classroom, by briefly discussing the ways in which we negotiated with standards-based curriculum, time constraints, class size, and PAR simultaneously.

**Agency (Action)**

In January, I spent several weeks supporting students with the development of their literature reviews by incorporating outside resources on health that aligned with their proposed problem statements. Additionally, I aligned the science standards by introducing students to human body systems, which they also included in their reviews. After students completed their literature reviews, they chose the research instruments (each group of four students chose an instrument) they wanted to use to collect their data (January). They then constructed or developed plans of how they would administer/use their data collection instruments (e.g. interviews, surveys, photo-interviews, videos, photos, field notes, etc.).

In February, students collected their data for three weeks and then analyzed their data for two weeks. What follows are students' narratives that highlight the ways in which engaging with the methodological process of PAR, and more specifically with data collection and analysis supported students in the ways in which they acted in the world now, and simultaneously supported them beyond their PAR project. For example, Gina posited:

> This research project has really shown/makes us students to make our own choices, and doing projects that let me do that in class helps me also outside the classroom. I

> have gained more ability to make choices in life that aren't based off of other individuals, in this world. (Journal entry, March 2016)

Similar to Gina, Xai also expressed that he felt that engaging in the PAR process was beneficial in multiple ways. Xai stated that:

> The interviews my group did made me feel like I am in charge of what people want and get it done. I felt like I wasn't the only one that wanted change and the interviews supported that. I felt like I had a lot more experience in this now and it will help me in the future.

Lastly, Joseph reflected on the ways in which engaging with PAR as a classroom community support him toward developing both problem solving skills and social skills, asserting:

> The participatory action research supported me by knowing how to collect data and it also helped by learning about how other people feel about our society or school. It helps me understand that with our data how to change what is going on. I think this will help me in the future by knowing how to solve problems. Also what helped me was group work. A lot of kids these days don't have social skills to be able to work in a group and all agree. I think this builds skills to work with other people.

During this same month, two class periods had already begun taking action, while simultaneously collecting and/or analyzing their data. By March, all five class periods had identified the ways in which they wanted to take action in response to their problem statement. Furthermore, students were mindful of their research question(s) and adjusted their actions accordingly, based on their analysis of the data they had gathered. Below, is a list that highlights each class period's plan of action:

- Period Two: Healthy vending machines on campus

- Period Three: Healthy tip Wednesdays
- Period Four: Gardening elective
- Period Five: Creating and sustaining a student run health website
- Period Six: School-wide water canteens and the removal of plastic bottles that are sold during lunchtime

In order to illustrate the ways in which the actions above transpired, I provide brief exemplars of period three's and period five's contributions, and then conclude with period four's PAR project in great detail. For example, on a weekly basis, students in period three research healthy tips, and then write up an announcement that is read every Wednesday over the loud speaker for our entire school community to hear at the start of our school day. As mentioned earlier in this section, period three's problem statement highlighted the ways in which students felt they did not have access to health education. In turn, students took action by cultivating the knowledge they felt our school community deserved and in turn, provided access to health education by sharing their collective insights on a weekly basis with our school community.

Additionally, students in period 5 developed a student run website which they named, Pioneer Health. Their website will soon (May 15) be linked to our school's website for all students and community members to have access to. Currently, the website includes the nutritional information of the cafeteria food served at our school site, information on GMOs and organic foods, announcements of upcoming student sporting events, and healthy tips (in collaboration with period three). What follows are students' reflections in regards to the ways in which engaging with PAR and taking action supported students' development. Jerry

shared how his engagement with PAR and developing the website supported him in recognizing that he was an agent of change. Jerry asserted:

> I know I am an agent of change because of our PAR project. My class and I got to change Bidwell for the better of our students. In the PAR, my group and I all got to create ways to find out what people think should happen and make it come true. This made me feel that I am contributing to my community. My group of four developed a survey about Bidwell's health. Lots of people say that the food is unhealthy and unappealing. This is why we have created a website informing people about healthy food and Bidwell Junior High School's non-healthy food. (Journal entry, March, 2016)

In a similar way, the following quotes below by Roberto and Tanya highlight the ways in which students recognized their agency, and more specifically, recognized that they were agents of change. In other words, they acknowledged they had agency, but when they utilized their agency toward personal or societal transformation, they defined themselves as agents of change. For example, Roberto asserted:

> I believe that I, and everyone has agency. However, I do not believe everyone is an agent of change. I think I am an agent of change. In the beginning I would not consider my self as one but now I truly believe that I can do things to help/change our world. I am willing to work as hard as possible. It is easiest for me to work at my hardest when I am working for something I believe in. I believe more people would be agents of change if there was something that they truly believed in. (Journal entry, March, 2016)

Aligned with Roberto's stance in regards to the difference between agency and being an agent of change, Tanya contended:

> I have agency, but PAR supported me in developing to an agent of change when we were writing the problem statement as a class. It made me feel like I could change our school even though I'm a kid. When we were solving our problem at our school we made a website that allowed students to look at our schools food/nutrition facts. I was a part of changing our school. I wasn't a change agent before I came to Ms. Adamians classroom. I learned a lot about how to make a difference. (Journal entry, March, 2016)

Thus, situating ourselves in spaces of distress throughout the school year supported us in engaging with a methodological process that moved us toward action because we had participated in naming the power dynamics between students and students and students and teacher, cultivated loving relationships, and recognized schooling as a site of contestation. What follows are students' quotes in response to their situatedness alongside their classmates and teacher, and their cultivation of agency and relationships while engaging with PAR in our science classroom. Tony reflected on his engagement with PAR, and defined himself as an agent of change. More importantly, he acknowledged that his agency was tied to his relationships with his classmates. He contended that:

> I believe that I am a small agent of change, along with the rest of my fourth period science class. We each are small, but when we joined together we made something great, a change. Engagement with PAR helped support developing the agency because we learned to work together, no matter how different we are, and together, we made a change. This change may inspire others to make changes too, which I

> believe can help our school become a better place. After time has passed, a change may not seem to be a change, it will become 'normal.' Hopefully, we and everyone around us can be inspired by change to make not just our school, but the world, a better place. (Journal entry, March, 2016)

Similar to Tony, Sheila described the ways in which engaging with PAR supported her toward recognizing the ways in which the process honored her voice, agency, and cultivation of knowledge asserting:

> I feel like I have agency because in this class we were constantly reminded to decide our selves what we wanted to do, how we wanted to do something. It wasn't like we didn't have a voice, we had our say in things. I feel that I am an agent of change because of our elective that we, as students, made. When making the gardening elective we made the decisions and we controlled how our project would turn out. This elective was made for students by students. When I was participating in the research for our new elective we got to be in control of how we handled our problems, we were never babied or looked down upon. As a class we were treated like we could handle our selves. All of this helped us develop agency.

Mari also acknowledged her agency and named the ways in which she utilized her agency both at the personal and societal levels, positing:

> I feel as though I am capabul of making my own choices. I am able to change and create change, but I do not do so often. My participation with the Participatory Action Research supported my agency. It helped me by pushing me to make choices. It also made me realise that it doesn't matter what my age, race, gender, social class, etc is. I

> can still make a change. I realized that I am capabul of being a researcher and an agent of change due to this.

The students' quotes above reflect the ways in which collectively healing through practice, in community, we had realized our agency, positionalities, and possibilities. We were mindful of the power dynamics and worked to agitate and trouble our positionalities while working together in community with each other and for each other while pushing back on hegemonic schooling practices with the purpose and passion to serve our school community. The students narrative above illustrate that they recognized that the process of PAR supported the building of community, individual and collective agency, and was a transformative methodological process rooted in the cultivation of knowledge by local communities who problematize their situatedness and work toward transforming dehumanizing and toxic practices.

In the pages ahead, I conclude Phase Three by focusing on period four's PAR project, because this project was the most developed during the time of this study. Therefore, I discuss in detail period four's engagement with PAR, highlight students' reflections, and share their work, in order to provide greater insight into the themes that emerged including agency and cultivation of knowledge. I start by revisiting our classroom community's problem statement, followed by exemplars of the contributions made toward the gardening course proposal,[7] which reflected the cultivation of knowledge in community with each other. I then share students' narratives that respond to how engaging with PAR honored their agency and transformed our school site.

Period four's problem statement was documented as follows:

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[7] Please refer to Appendix A for the complete Gardening Proposal created by students that was submitted to our school board and approved on March 23, 2016.

> There are three big reasons why we feel that our school needs a gardening elective. There are currently no electives that benefit the school financially, esthetically, or morally. First of all, there are no gardening electives for students to support our school with fresh organic foods, while receiving an education at the same time. Also, we don't really have any color or variety on our campus, and nobody to fix that problem. Furthermore, those that may want to grow their own food, there are really no options. Sadly, we don't have fresh natural foods for the school, a proper education on plants, and an elective that would keep our school's students active while making our school a much healthier place.

In their problem statement, students had collectively problematized their lack of access to fresh and organic foods and health education. Additionally, students recognized that there was, "nobody to fix that problem" in regards to their campus being absent of, "color or variety." In this sense, students were naming that they were going to be the change agents that solved the problem. Students also identified how the curricular practices at our school site constricted the amount of activity they engaged in on a daily basis. Consequently, they acknowledged that it was "morally" wrong for a school to not provide "fresh natural foods for the school, a proper education on plants, and an elective that would keep our school's students active while making our school a much healthier place."

Once students had named the problem, they collectively developed their research question. Their research question was:

> "In what ways can we provide students at Bidwell a learning experience on how to grow their food, a proper education on plants, and provide fresh natural food for our school?"

Students defined themselves collectively, using "we" and showed care for their larger school community, beyond their self-interests by seeking to provide access to health education and healthy foods for "students at Bidwell."

While students engaged in the PAR process as described early in this section, we simultaneously began working on their Gardening elective proposal. I was prepared to facilitate this process, because a month before I had developed my own proposal for an elective course called, "Voices Of youth Inspiring Community changE" (VOICE), which was approved by the school board on January 20, 2016. However, the passage of this elective required me to engage in discourse with the school board for fifteen minutes while they questioned the intentions of the course calling it "controversial." In our local newspaper, they reported (Enterprise Record, January 20, 2016):

> The board also approved a number of new course proposals, including several STEM courses like Flight and Space, EV3 Lego Robotics and CTE Medical Terminology and Introductory Anatomy, as well as a course called Voices of Youth Inspiring Community Change, which was described as "controversial." The elective course would be offered at Bidwell Junior High and would "challenge students to reflect on their individual identity in relationship to the current socio-political context of school in order to take action in their schools and/or communities." Students in the course would identify a problem in their community, conduct research and gather data, and develop the knowledge and skills to address inequities in their schools and communities, teacher Annie Adamian said. Adamian added that the course would utilize anti-oppressive education. After additional explanation of the course content and reasoning behind the use of college-level texts, the course was approved.

Thus, my experiences in engaging in similar practices, provided me greater insight toward facilitating students' cultivation of their gardening course proposal and supporting them when the time came to present to the school board. We first revisited our problem statement and students revised their statement (as reflected above). I then explained what a rationale was to students and asked them to turn their problem statement into their rationale (see Appendix A). Next, I asked students to complete the statement, "This course will: prepare students to, provide students, benefit students by, and benefit our school by…"Aroura's response is an example of the ways in which students responded, stating,

> The course will teach students how to grow plants and healthy homegrown fruits and vegies, if they want to, or just for fun, or even if they want to become gardeners. It will benefit students who aren't in the elective too by getting good, fresh food when they get their lunch…it will benefit the school by having Bidwell be known by how healthy the school is and what is mind blowing is that students here made their own elective (February, 2016)!

Therefore, after collecting their work, I typed up all of their contributions and placed them into four categories in a bulleted format. As a class, students revised their statements collectively and decided which statements they wanted to include in their course proposal. I did not need to support them with editing during this part of our process. I highlight this poignant point because, students' development of literacy skills and their cultivation of knowledge are apparent as reflected in the transformation of their narratives from Phase One up to this point. Below, I share some of their contributions that they included in their course proposal organized in the four categories that students addressed:

1) This course will provide students:

- Knowledge for those that don't know where food comes from.
- Foods that are natural and healthy for the school so everyone can be healthier.
- Inspire students to grow their own plants.

2) This course will prepare students:

- With skills to have access to foods and become self-sufficient.
- To learn to make healthy/home grown fruits and vegetables.
- With knowing the difference between GMO and organic vegetables and fruits.
- For the responsibility of having to take care of things, which is a vital thing to have in life.

3) This course will benefit students:

- Learn to take care of living things.
- Working outside in an active environment.
- Surrounding students with a healthier environment and knowledge about plants, including how to grow them.
- Students will be more proud of their school.

4) This course will benefit the school:

- Make school more colorful, interesting, and surprising.
- Increased student engagement.
- A cleaner, healthier environment, which will consist of more colorful surroundings, and supply fresh healthy food choices to the cafeteria's menus.
- Overall, it will make Bidwell a safer, healthier school for all of its students and staff.

- Providing a free food source, a more vibrant looking campus, and it shows how Bidwell is a healthy place which helps our school gain more popularity among the community.
- It will provide the school with another elective for our incoming 6th graders.

The next portion of the course proposal required students to align "instructional strategies" and "assessments" with, the California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards, in addition to constructing a year long outline that identified the units of study and amount of time each unit would take. Since I had shared and explained what state standards were to students earlier on in the year (naming the game), they were familiar with the document I asked them to review (i.e. California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards). Each group of students (nine groups of four students) then chose the top three standards they wanted to work with. Students then voiced which standard they wanted to work with and each group ended up with one of the top three standards that they had chosen. We then discussed what they wanted the course to include, how long each unit should be, and ultimately designed what the year would look like (see Appendix A). I then asked students to write down all the different types of instructional strategies and assessments they had experienced from kindergarten to seventh grade. I again collected students' responses and created a list of all the instructional strategies and assessments they had identified. Each group was given the list, and they then aligned their chosen instructional strategies and assessments with the standards and unit of study (see Appendix A).

Additionally, students wanted to include a section that provided access and equity for students with disabilities. They stated in their course proposal that the course should provide, "Raised flower/garden beds, wheelchair accessible pathways, modified tools, and access to

educational materials." Thus, upon completion, our principal took their proposal to a district wide meeting where district administers signed on, meaning they supported the proposal. This meant we were ready to submit our proposal to the school board. While we waited for the proposal to go through the approval process, we continued to engage with PAR. During this time, I asked students to reflect on the PAR process. Below, are exemplars of students' narratives which illustrate the ways in which our classroom community's engagement with PAR, evoked the cultivation of knowledge, agency, and transformation. Natalia reflected on the ways in which engaging with PAR honored her identity and brilliance:

> I believe I am an agent of change because of the creation of the gardening elective. As a co-researcher my engagement in the PAR supported my agency by teaching me that even kids can make a change in the community, not just adults. When the class was developing the elective proposal and I saw one of my statements finalized in it I realized that kids can do the same things adults can. I also was proud of the class when we saw the example proposal done by a [name of school redacted] teacher and ours was just as detailed. (Journal entry, March, 2016)

Cassandra also reflected on the ways in which engaging with PAR in the classroom supported honored her humanity and agency now, as opposed to when she was older:

> We made an elective students don't normally do that. We all worked hard in the PAR. We had to do most of the work ourselves. Realizing we did this is kind of amazing because not many students do this. So realizing we have agency is really cool.

Additionally, Cory shared how the methodological process of PAR supported him in multiple ways positing:

> I feel that I have agency in that I make a majority of my own choices. I am an agent of change because I never used to make a lot of choices by myself, I just rolled with whatever was happening. Of course, doing a lot of research and experimentation changed the way I perceive a lot of things. I usually examine all sides of a problem and situation now that I know how to address such things in the right way. After the experiments/activities we've gone through as a class, making observations come a lot easier than they used to. This year of science also helps me in history in the same aspect.

Lastly, Kai shared that engaging with PAR, "made me feel as if I can be in charge of something and not just a pawn in the game of life. I feel as though I am an agent of change."

On March 23, 2016, during the time of this study, students presented their course proposal to the school board. Of the of 35 students that made up our community, nine students presented on behalf of our classroom community. A week before the school board meeting, I asked students to raise their hands if they wanted to present, and 13 students raised their hands. I then asked everyone to put their heads down and raise their hands if they wanted to present, but didn't raise their hand because they were nervous. In turn, six more students raised their hands. I spoke individually with each student who wanted to present, but was nervous and they all decided to present. In the end, due to scheduling conflicts, nine of the students were able to present on behalf of our community. Of these nine students, six were students that initially didn't raise their hands due to nervousness. Collectively, students prepared a thirty second to one minute piece that built on the contributions from the presenter before them. I had invited the students' families, and most of them were able to make it. When it was time to present, the students spoke with passion, courage, and heart. It was a

very powerful moment and you could feel the energy in the room. One of the questions posed during the meeting by a board member was, "why did you chose these specific types of assessments?" (Video recording, March, 2016). Tony approached the podium and stated, "As students we've taken a lot of tests. All we do is constantly take tests on paper, and bubble in answers, sometimes it would be nice for us kids to show what we know through diagrams and presentations" (Video recording, 2016). In response the same school board member said, "like you are now," and to which Tony responded, "yes." Additionally, in the local newspaper (Enterprise Record, March 23, 2016), they reported that:

> Seventh grade science students from Bidwell Junior High submitted a new course proposal for an elective gardening course. Course proposals are typically submitted by teachers, but this proposal was submitted by the students along with their teacher Annie Adamian. The students spoke at length about their proposal before answering questions from the trustees. According to the proposal, the gardening course will teach students about the science of plants, agricultural biology and organic gardening with students learning how to plant, maintain and harvest foods. The board praised their efforts before voting to approve the course proposal. 'I commend you for putting this course proposal together,' trustee Linda Hovey said.

Consequently, the school board approved the gardening elective and the gardening elective was one of the most requested courses by students for the 2016 –2017 school year.

Lastly, similar to previous years, toward the end of April, all five class periods will contribute their work and documentation of their process as a PAR newspaper (in progress). This document will be distributed school-wide. The paper will include all five class's projects. Their articles will include a title and an introduction, followed by their problem

statement, data collection instruments, data analysis, action, reflection and gratitude to their school community for their participation in their studies.

**Conclusion**

As shown throughout this chapter, the findings were presented in a linear structure organized within three phases, which my students and I were co-creators of through action and reflection – praxis. In order to honor the process of cultivation, sharing the findings as a story supported and aligned with the methodological process of tsPAR and the guiding tenets of CRP-Ed. Thus, by embedding the emergent themes within the specific phases (e.g. building a beloved community, cultivating critical consciousness, and engaging with participatory action research) I was able to illustrate our situatedness during specific times and spaces, therefore naming how we "cultivated pedagogy" with each other and for each other – rooted in love, critical consciousness, and collective agency.

# CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

For the latter half of my 15 years as a middle school teacher, I have revisited a question that ultimately became the overarching research question for this study: "In what ways can our classroom community engage with humanizing pedagogy and research towards the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of students and teacher and the building of a beloved community?" I explored this question in particular, because often times, regardless of the positionality of one's stance on the purpose of schooling, educational discourse is largely situated within the binary of either the student or the teacher. In fact, whether the narrative is generated from a social justice stance or from a neoliberal stance, the relationship between students and teachers is more often than not, severed. What I mean, is that the discourse is either about how teachers teach and act or about how students learn and act. Yet, the story of the relationship between us in regards to inspiring collective agency and the practice toward freedom is rarely shared. As reflected in this study, our classroom community cultivated a humanizing epistemology that acknowledged teaching and learning as acts of love. It was within this relational space that this study turned a critical lens toward.

Consequently, this study was inspired by a painful mistake I had made in years past (shared in the introduction of this study). Although I was invested in anti-oppressive practices in the classroom alongside my students, I carried a harmful assumption about my students' capacity to cultivate knowledge and transformative practices *now*, as opposed to *later*. In some ways, I carried the same assumptions about my own capacities as their teacher. By intentionally honoring my students' and my humanity now, the findings showed the ways in which my work alongside them supported a more humanizing experience and thus, meant I was fighting alongside them, not for them, and more importantly – they did not have to

fight my assumptions of their capacity to love, heal, and transform now, as opposed to later. For example, we were not engaging with anti-oppressive practices in order to use them later, but instead, we intentionally embraced and utilized humanizing and transformative practices within our current situatedness. In other words, we moved at the speed of pain.

As demonstrated in the findings, our classroom community moved from a space of numbness, self-hate/hate for others, toward feeling self-love/love for others and understanding our current situatedness therefore propelling our class – to move at the speed of pain. This notion of moving at the speed of pain is a phrase that I named during my analysis of the findings. As reflected in the findings, moving at the speed of pain meant we situated ourselves in the painful realities of oppression, while simultaneously moving based on our current understandings and capacities to feel, while we named them. In this sense, feeling the pain *is* what generated our movement. For example, students' journal responses in relationship to "reading aloud" showed the ways in which they cultivated their agency to move from a space of fear and self-doubt, toward agency and self-confidence. They recognized that their active participation was a crucial component toward their own personal healing and the healing of our classroom community.

The space in–between the moment they recognized their fears and moved toward agency, is an example of how we held spaces of distress in the classroom together in order to move from dispossession toward cultivation. Our collective movement cultivated what Ginwright (2010) named, "radical healing." He posited that, "radical healing occurs in community where the space to imagine and hope encourage young people to shed their fear and pain in order to move forward with love and optimism" (p. 10).

The development of hope in the face of injustice is a revolutionary act. Hope is the antithesis to hopelessness in that, "hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism" (Freire, 1992, p. 3). Paradoxically, the hope for justice resides in a space of "rage and love, without which there is no hope" (Freire, 1992, p. 4). Hope then, and more accurately, critical hope, lives in–between acknowledging systems of oppression, dehumanization, and suffering and envisioning freedom, humanization, and love. Indeed, critical hope, "as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness" (Freire, 1992, p. 2).

Our classroom community started this painful yet hopeful process together by reflecting on why so often students' voices were absent in the classroom. As a teacher, year in and year out, every time I asked students to voluntarily read aloud, only two or three students' hands (usually white males) would go up. This year, during the time of this study, it was no different. Similar to years prior, I experienced a moment of deep pain when I looked out onto a classroom full of young people that I had just met, knowing that more often than not, the hands that weren't raised were due to pain, mistrust, and self-doubt. During the time of this study, I recognized I had a responsibility to hold this space with them, share with them why their inactions were rooted in their suffering, and at the same time, take small steps with them toward moving at the speed of pain.

It was during Phase One that students reflected on when they themselves had encountered dehumanizing and painful experiences that had caused them to develop self-doubt. They shared how they longed to participate and share their voice, but did not trust that such actions would be honored in the classroom. As documented in the findings, students

also acknowledged they had a responsibility to actively participate as listeners and supporters. They acknowledged that their support for their classmates was a crucial component toward our classroom building a beloved community. By framing "reading aloud" as our initial process, we began in a small way, practicing the building of love, trust, and healing collectively. During Phase One, in my heart I had held hope that my students would honor this space alongside me, and have the capacity to show love and respect for their peers and themselves in order to embrace our humanity together.

During Phase One, students' began raising their hands to read for the first time in our classroom. Each time a new community member would read, silence would fill the room. Our beloved community would follow along with the reader's words, as tension, hope, and possibility filled the room. You could hear it in the student's voice that had not read for years, but had stepped into the process of moving at the speed of pain. You could feel the love and pride in the room as we held the space with the courageous student that had embraced the work toward healing.

Students acknowledged the ways in which we moved at the speed of pain collectively. For example, Xai stated that, "Me personally don't like reading out loud because I stutter and read slowly. But now thanks to this class I have overcome this scared habit. I have much respect for this class and I'm sure everyone else feels that to, So I'm excited for the year to come" (Journal entry, November, 2015)! Also, Mai shared that, "I feel our class is doing good because when the teacher says who wants to read, half the class are raising there hand to read" (Journal entry, November, 2015). Our classroom community could see and feel the process of healing and our work toward building a beloved community, in that, we observed more and more students raising their hands as our days together went by. This was

more of a symbolic gesture in ways, for the work that we were preparing ourselves to engage with collectively in the months to come.

Subsequently, working in spaces of distress meant we embraced the pain, tension, and discomfort, and through practice affirmed that these feelings were precisely what supported our development (e.g. personally, socially, emotionally, and academically) – which was rooted in the cultivation of love and our collective hope, while paradoxically situated within an oppressive and constricting institution. The same space that in the past (e.g. public school classroom) had attempted to strip us of our humanity, brilliance, and collective agency, was precisely where we would redefine for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we were – through action and reflection. A prime example from the findings of what our movement hoped to generate, was Tony's quote, when he stated that, "Hopefully, we and everyone around us can be inspired by change to make not just our school, but the world, a better place (Journal entry, March, 2016).

**Problematizing our Situatedness**

When problematizing our (students and teachers) situatedness, I recognize that teaching and learning toward social justice in a public school classroom means to consistently work within a space of contradiction driven by common sense tactics (e.g. standardization, production of human capital, dehumanization, and fear) (Kumashiro, 2012). Simultaneously, I do this work alongside my students while knowing that the dominant cultural discourse is embedded within the Common Core and federally mandated state standards – normalized, measured and regulated with high stakes testing (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter, 2005). I acknowledge that both my students and myself will be monitored, regulated, and punished based on how well we have taught and learned the dominant

narrative. I do so, knowing these results will support a neoliberal frame that will be used against us and will be used to define us (Kumashiro, 2012). It is within this space of contradiction, discomfort, and tension that this study turned a critical lens toward and I humbly share with you.

This study explored the ways in which our classroom community (students and teacher) engaged with humanizing pedagogy in a seventh grade science classroom, toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community, and the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognized in our science classroom, school and/or community while utilizing the process of teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR)[8] (Adamian, 2015) and Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed)[9] (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015); both of which supported the purpose of this study in practice and research, in addition to guiding the discussion section of this chapter.

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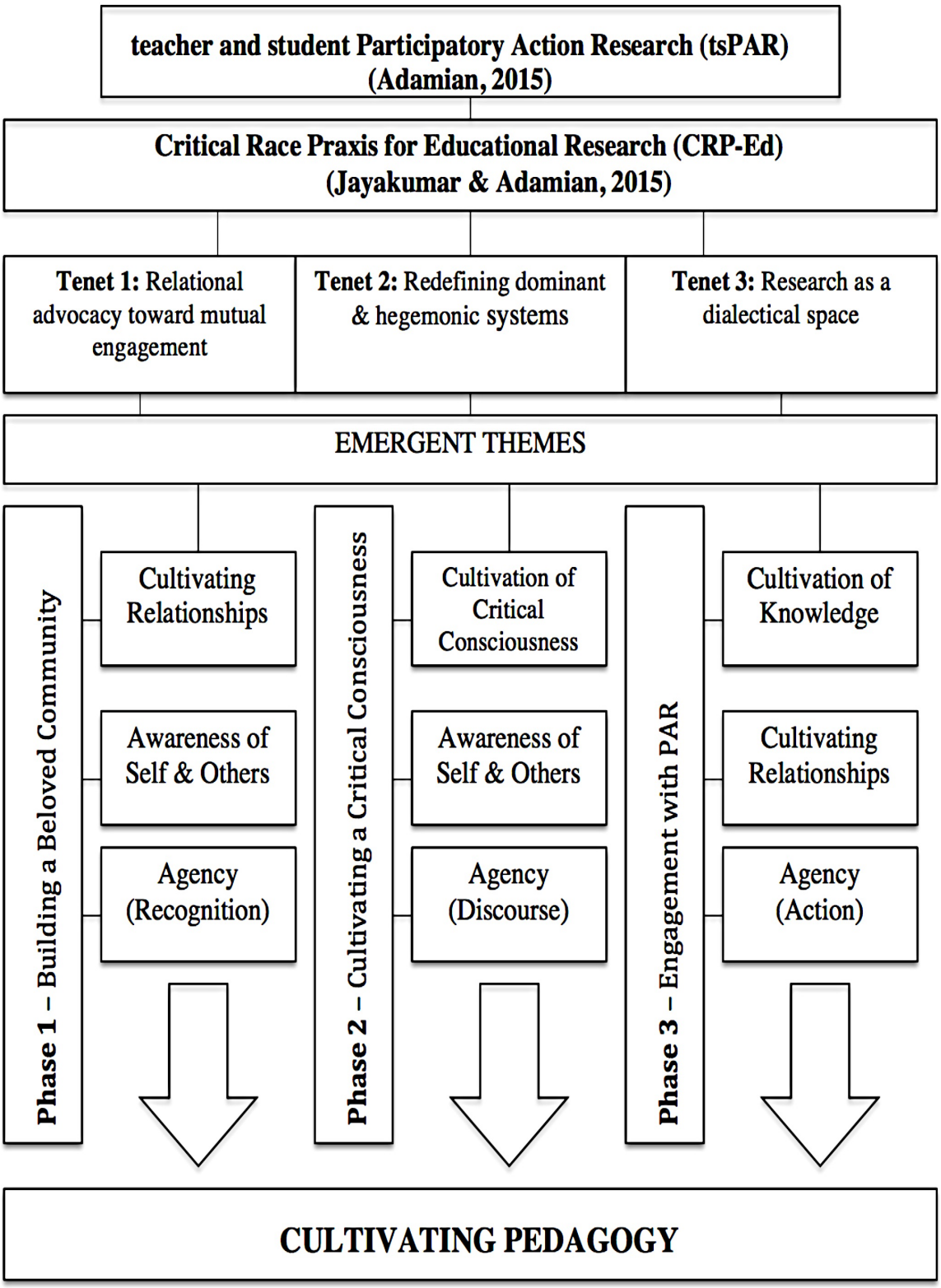
[8] tsPAR draws from participatory action research (PAR)/youth participatory action research (yPAR) studies which intentionally honor and center the experiences and knowledge of local communities working toward justice. As reflected in the review of the literature, communities engaged with PAR/yPAR have changed unjust policies and/or practices, transformed their own lives, and the lives of those they love (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Stovall & Delgado, 2009). However, how external supporter(s) (teacher/researcher) experience "formally or informally some kind of praxis" and "the promotion of people's collectives and their systematic praxis," is predominantly missing in PAR/yPAR studies (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 25). Consequently, the absence of external supporter(s) (teacher/researcher) dismisses the tensions, uncertainty, contradictions, and vulnerably of the "co-researchers" relational/methodological process. Thus, naming the existing power relations, while centering the local community's engagement with PAR/yPAR, carves out a critical space to grapple with hegemonic systems and practices and further challenge the ways in which educational research perpetuates oppressive practices. In this way, educational researchers may turn their lens onto the relationship between external supporters (including teachers/researchers) and local communities (including students/young people) engaged in PAR/yPAR that intentionally work to name the hegemonic social structures and constraints, while pushing back on them.

[9] CRP-Ed consists of four tenets including 1) relational advocacy toward mutual engagement, 2) redefining dominant and hegemonic systems, 3) research as a dialectical space, and 4) critical engagement with policy. These tenets support the ways in which educational scholars approach research, troubling and problematizing oppressive policies and practices. For the purposes of advocacy CRP-Ed requires engaging with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice, while honoring the knowledge and voices of local communities and simultaneously naming the spaces of distress that (for the purposes of this study) reflects how teacher and students work in and through together.

The following discussion revisits the theoretical underpinnings of this study, while reviewing the findings through a CRP-Ed lens. Therefore, in the pages ahead, I outline three of the four tenets of CRP-Ed, which guided the analysis of this study and supported the process of tsPAR. In essence, the five emergent themes highlighted in Chapter Four of this study, are aligned with and summarized within a specific tenet of CRP-Ed, while simultaneously highlighting the ways in which CRP-Ed supported the methodological process of tsPAR in a seventh grade science classroom.

The tenets of CRP-Ed required our classroom community to acknowledge the intersections of power both vertically and horizontally (see Freire, 1970). More specifically, CRP-Ed required naming systems of oppression (vertically) while simultaneously having our classroom community turn its lens toward (horizontally) "a projection of particular kinds of relations of self to self, and between self, others, and knowledge, and power" and the ways in which we situated ourselves in these spaces of distress (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 25). Therefore, the methodological process of tsPAR was guided by the underlying assumptions of CRP-Ed, both in practice and in research and thus the summary of findings is organized through the utilization of the CRP-Ed tenets and within the three phases that were discussed in Chapter Four of this study. Thus the organization of the summary of findings is illustrated in *Figure 3* below in order to better depict the multilayered approach employed for the purposes of this study.

*Figure 3*. Organization of Summary of Findings



## Summary of the Findings

This multilayered study examined the ways in which our classroom community negotiated humanizing pedagogy and participatory action research in a standards-based life science classroom toward the full development (e.g. personal, social, emotional, academic) of our classroom community, and the dismantling of inequitable practices and unjust policies that we recognize in our science classroom, school and/or community. More specifically, humanizing pedagogy (theoretical framework for this study) was practiced through: 1) the building of a beloved community (hooks, 1995; Joyce, 1913; King, 1957), 2) the cultivation of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), and 3) the engagement with PAR (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). These practices on-the-ground, inspired our classroom community to contribute toward the development of a framework that aligns with and speaks to CRP–Ed and tsPAR in standards-based classrooms, which the emergent themes inspired, which I named, "Cultivating Pedagogy."

This study also builds on existing yPAR and PAR studies (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Cammarota, 2011; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Stovall, Calderon, Carrera, & King, 2009; Stovall, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Yang, 2009) by introducing and utilizing teacher and student participatory action research (tsPAR) (Adamian, 2015), which honored the process and intentions of PAR/yPAR, while simultaneously troubling and problematizing the ways in which PAR/yPAR was engaged with in a constricted institutional context. Additionally, our classroom community's engagement with PAR and tsPAR was guided by Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (CRP-Ed) (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015) wherein three of the four tenets of CRP-

Ed evoked a mutual engagement across differing positionalities, therefore contributing toward redefining the purpose of schooling, and defining for ourselves who we are.

*Tenet One –Relational Advocacy Toward Mutual Engagement*

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*Phase One – Building a Beloved Community*

As discussed in Chapter Three, Tenet One of CRP–Ed, *Relational advocacy toward mutual engagement* turns a critical lens onto the ways in which collaborations across different positionalities are navigated while working toward building anti-hegemonic relationships. During Phase One – Building a Beloved Community, the findings demonstrated the ways in which our classroom community worked toward cultivating relationships while simultaneously acknowledging our differing positionalities. Throughout this phase, both the students and myself were consistently mindful of the ways in which we interacted with each other and with the world. For example, we realized that collectively working toward healing and loving ourselves required us to first recognize our fears, painful pasts, and the ways in which we were defined by both oppressive systems (vertically) and the ways in which we interacted with ourselves and each other (horizontally). Our work involved immersing ourselves in reflecting on our pasts, confronting our fears, and defining for ourselves who we were through action and reflection. As discussed in the findings, students named both horizontal and vertical forms of violence, and reflected on the ways in which these forms of violence shaped their actions, harmful interactions with themselves and others, and in turn, took action toward loving themselves by engaging in humanizing practices that supported our classroom community toward collective healing.

We recognized that doing this work collectively meant we needed to work on loving ourselves in order to love others even more. The findings showed how our classroom community developed an awareness of self and others, and therefore, supported our cultivation of relationships as a classroom community rooted in trust, love, and the hope for a beloved community. Joanne's reflection mirrors many students' responses highlighted in the findings, when she stated that:

> I think there is trust in the classroom and that makes it beloved because everyone in the class feels loved and valued, and supported and it helps them not feel embarrassed or scared to do anything in front of the classroom and since they are not embarrassed or scared then they are able to get their work done.

In essence, we collectively engaged in a struggle with ourselves, with each other and with the world. We realized that everyday that we entered the classroom, we had to fight for our humanity and cultivate love for ourselves and for others, "because we have a class that is a family" (Mike, 2015). As reflected throughout the findings in Phase One, students shared the ways in which the process of building a beloved community supported them in feeling what Carlos posited when he stated that, "I feel welcomed and wanted and if you feel that then you learn easier. Also, you feel like you want to learn. Its always important to feel wanted and to have a purpose" (2015). Throughout Phase One, the findings showed that students felt "valued," were able to "be themselves" and in turn build loving relationships where, "The students respect, care, and learn from each other and we support students who need help" (Pa, 2015). In essence, "the small circles of love that we have managed to form in our individual lives represent a concrete realistic reminder that beloved community is not a dream, that it already exists for those of us who have done the work" (hooks, 1995, p. 264).

Additionally, Tenet One of CRP-Ed discusses the ways in which relational advocacy is situated within a U.S. racialized capitalist system that normalizes and upholds heteronormative-white male supremacy. Thus, while cultivating relationships rooted in honoring each other's humanity, our classroom community simultaneously turned a critical lens onto the ways in which to push back on institutions (U.S. public schools) that reproduce systems of oppression. The findings illustrated the ways in which our classroom community acknowledged that working toward dismantling oppressive policies and practices required a mutual engagement with a critical consciousness. For example, while engaged in group work and reading aloud, the findings illustrated the ways in which students named horizontal systems of oppression and in turn identified their current situatedness vertically, therefore seeking immediate solutions to the problems they recognized as harmful and/or dehumanizing through action and reflection, which I discuss in Phase Three of this chapter.

The ways in which our classroom community intentionally situated ourselves in spaces of distress[10] when naming systems of oppression, while acknowledging moments of discomfort, and simultaneously recognizing moments of negotiation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance with ourselves, with each other, and with the world (Ellsworth, 1997) was also demonstrated throughout the findings in Phase One. For example, students recognized the tensions in our classroom during "reading aloud," sharing that they were ready to support

[10] A generative process rooted in the tensions that transpire in the classroom when students and teachers engage with the push and pull between oppression and liberation (e.g. cultivation and dispossession; fear and hope; harmful pasts and agency; self interest and community; dehumanization and humanity; colonized knowledge and cultivation of knowledge; public and private; hate and love) with the potential to contribute toward redefining the purpose of schooling and teachers and students. Holding this space between these binaries (spaces of distress) is where teaching and learning become an act of love and provide us the imagination to develop something new. Working within this space of distress honors the necessary and untapped relational bond that inspires and brings forth the movement toward change (Adamian, 2015).

their peers by moving alongside them from their painful pasts, toward a hopeful future. Brian shared that he would embrace this space with his classmates and voiced his support sharing with his peers, "Don't let the pass catch up to you. I'm here to support you to get ahead of it" (September, 2015). Erica acknowledged how her and her peers could:

> support my classmates by listening to them read, not having conversations, and not laughing. All the other students should be respectful and not talk or laugh either. The students that are not reading should try it and push themselves out of their comfort zone. Me and other students need to be supportive when they finally do. (September, 2015)

The cultivation of relationships during Phase One demonstrated the ways in which our classroom community developed trusting and loving relationships with a collective purpose toward healing and transformation driven by hope and possibilities at both the personal and societal levels. For example, students' journal responses illustrated the ways in which they not only worked toward personal development, but also showed concern for their peers. More specifically, students' responses throughout Phase One demonstrated care, love, and support for their peers' development. Students recognized that their personal development was tied to the development of our classroom community.

With the collective cultivation of trust and hope we worked toward hooks' (1995) vision of a beloved community, which she stated required, "addressing our individual and collective suffering…find ways to heal and recover" (p. 145). As a classroom community, we developed these dispositions and collectively acknowledged that, "it was about self-transformation, changing the way we think, live, love, and handle pain" (Kelley, 2002, p. 11). In essence, situating ourselves in spaces of distress was a process that we realized supported

our work toward building a beloved community.

The findings in Phase One reflected the ways in which, "healing is a dance between the individual and the community" that we developed with intention and care (Ginwright, 2010, p. 77). In doing so, our classroom community challenged the dominant narrative across different spheres of influence. It was within this context, that we recognized how power was contested in relational ways within and across selves, and experienced personal and collective healing. In other words, Tenet One discusses how relational advocacy toward mutual engagement intentionally works to name the tensions and contradictions that arise/exist while working both across differing positionalities and against oppressive policies and practices. Consequently, our classroom community intentionally situated ourselves in spaces of distress, acknowledging the notion that, "the painful path *is* the hopeful path" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 10). In doing so, we worked toward building a beloved community by reflecting on the ways in which our own sense of self, self-harm, or mistrust of others was rooted in oppressive and dehumanizing practices that we were willing to grapple with in order to move toward collective healing with each other and for each other. Thus, as demonstrated in the findings, our collective struggle honored the principles of building a beloved community and reflected the hope and possibilities toward freedom which strived for what Kelley (2002) asserted:

> Too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new

generations to continue to struggle for change (p. vii).

The relationships between students and students, and students and myself, were rooted in love, hope, healing, and the cultivation of knowledge. For example, throughout Phase One, the findings demonstrated the ways in which our cultivation of loving relationships was a fundamental process that was essential to cultivating pedagogy in the classroom that supported students in honoring the process of teaching and learning for and with each other. Students' quotes throughout Phase One of the findings showed the ways in which they valued the process of learning and that they were co-constructing a classroom community that honored their identities and process toward reaching their full potential.

Imagining together, the ways in which to move our classroom community beyond the culture of satisfying a means to an end (perpetuates dominator thinking and market-reform tactics), and instead honoring the *process* toward personal and social transformation was also highlighted in students' responses in Phase One of the findings. Paradoxically, we were able to develop a sense of belonging within an oppressive institutional context, because the trust and love we shared with each other supported us in imagining the possibilities for humanizing schooling conditions. We imagined Kelley's (2002) notion of "freedom dreams" when he envisioned and posited that, "we must tap into our own collective imaginations, that we do what earlier generations did: dream" because, "making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us" (p. xii). Thus, the notion of building a beloved community in the classroom affirmed the *process* of teaching and learning toward social justice and humanized the relationships between students, and the students and myself while simultaneously recognizing that our differing positionalities influenced the ways in which students positioned themselves alongside each other and

myself. More specifically, although the acknowledgement and cultivation of relationships between students and students and students and myself transpired, what was not dismantled was my authority in "allowing," and "letting" students be themselves. Although at times students were able to acknowledge the space of distress as the catalyst toward collective change, at times, students held onto the notion that I was "allowing" it to happen. These ways of being are aligned with both our situatedness within the classroom and also students' experiences within the larger hegemonic context. These power dynamics would not and did not dissolve. However, even within this contradictory space, our cultivation of relationships and collective agency agitated and troubled our positionalities and inspired our classroom community to imagine beyond a hegemonic culture and a culture of fear.

It is in the envisioning of freedom that, "transports us to another place, compel us to relive the horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society" (Kelley, 2002, p. 9). Our imagination moved us to collectively work toward and acknowledge that the building a beloved community was rooted in what Duncan-Andrade called, "critical hope." Duncan-Andrade (2009) asserted that critical hope required us (teachers):

> to recognize that our damaged petals, and those of our students, are not what need to be reformed out of us; they are what need to be celebrated about us. Each time we convey this—the true value of the painful path—we are building critical hope in the person next to us who wonders if they, too, can make it through the crack (p. 192).

Consequently, naming the oppressive practices and policies we negotiated with on a daily basis in the classroom, we acknowledged that it was not students and teachers which the dominant narrative falsely blamed for the suffering, economic inequities, and corruption stemming from a U.S. racialized capitalist system; but the oppressive systems themselves

that needed to be changed. In essence, we challenged and dismantled the dehumanizing schooling practices that require students and teachers to engage in practices rooted in, "altering the human soul to fit its conditions, instead of altering the human conditions to fit the human soul" (Chesterton, 1987, p. 104).

Furthermore, relational advocacy pushes back on dominant cultural practices by generating social performances (e.g. troubling power relations) that counter hegemonic practices and thus contribute toward redefining self and self with others. In Phase One, the findings showed that our classroom community began defining for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we were. Students shared they ways in which they recognized their personal and collective agency, illuminated their stories of healing, collective identity, and acknowledged that they were beautiful young people prepared and willing to push back on dehumanizing practices. This was evident in their journal responses throughout the findings, where they named themselves as "scientists," "participatory action researchers," "we," and "beautiful." In turn, students (and myself) experienced personal transformation while, "integrating issues of power, history, self-identity, and collective agency, [wherein] healing rebuilds hope and political possibilities for young people" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 37).

By agitating power dynamics, Tenet One – *Relational advocacy toward mutual engagement*, aims to dismantle dominant cultural narratives that attempt to dehumanize communities that are oppressed. Tenet One of CRP-Ed required us to name the tensions and acknowledge that it was within this space of contestation that our personal and collective transformation had the potential to transpire. Aligned with Tenet One, and within this relational space, our individual and collective healing was embraced, and the development of new anti-neoliberal frames were cultivated in our classroom. For example, our classroom

community confronted institutional racism, horizontal and vertical violence, and recognized that we had the agency to transform the injustices that impacted our lives and our community. We saw this in the video documentation, which captured students' critique of Eurocentric curriculum, and in students' journal responses in relationship to the harmful teaching practices they had experienced throughout their schooling.

Lastly, Tenet One attends to being mindful of the contradictions and tensions across advocacy contexts (e.g. schooling, teachers and students). In this sense, although relational advocacy is situated between the push and pull between liberation and oppression (self to self, self with others, and with systems of power – see Ellsworth, 1997), engaging with these tensions is precisely what can contribute toward dismantling oppressive policies and practices. It was within this space that this study turned a critical lens toward in the efforts toward naming and pushing back on the contradictions, power dynamics, and constrains that our classroom community was situated in. In doing so, Tenet One supported the practice of Principles one and two of tsPAR which are revisited below:

> Principle 1: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto their relationship (between students, and students and teacher) while naming/documenting: the tensions, contradictions, possibilities and/or constraints that arise/exist.
>
> Principle 2: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto systems of oppression (classroom/school/community) while naming/documenting the tensions, contradictions, and/or constraints that arise/exist.

Facilitating the development of a beloved community in a multi-racial, multi-class, and multi-gender classroom that was situated within an oppressive schooling system, required strategic maneuvering in multiple ways. For example, as reflected in the findings,

radical healing for students of color in our classroom community was experienced differently than for the white students in our community. Similarly, radical healing for females was experienced differently in contrast to their male counterparts. In other words, in order for us to mutually engage from differing positionalities toward social justice, we were required to confront our own positionalities, our biases and assumptions, and pain collectively – with the firm belief that our love and trust as a collective would only become stronger if we were willing to enter this contested space together. Having taken the risk in smaller, yet meaningful ways such as "reading aloud," supported us to move into this more complex space together, because our first experience, although uncomfortable and risky, had proven to be hopeful, transformative, and loving in the midst of pain and discomfort.

Consequently, when our classroom community engaged in the process of building a beloved community, their counteractions with their everyday oppressive conditions generated spaces for radical healing and, "points to the process of building hope, optimism, and vision to create justice in the midst of oppression" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 9). Working alongside students toward mutual engagement rooted in healing and love, required grappling on multiple fronts and with multiple positionalities. Additionally, as reflected in the findings, justifying classroom practices required cultivating pedagogy alongside my students that aligned with the Common Core and state mandated standards. For example, strategically using "reading aloud" as our foundational confrontation was a practice that I could facilitate and justify as a teacher. For example, "student participation" has been acknowledged as a "best practice" in "teacher professional development programs" for over a decade. Although it was contradictory for me to align my teaching practices with dominant narratives and top-down directives, it was precisely within this space of contradiction and constriction that our

classroom community worked in. A space of distress that was cultivated by the constant push and pull between Eurocentric practices and anti-oppressive practices; teacher's positionality and students' positionalities, dispossession and cultivation. Therefore, troubling our positionalities and working in contradictory ways, and acknowledging the constrictive contexts that evoked such actions, provided us the ability to agitate and push back on dominant cultural narratives and develop new stories that honored our humanity while simultaneously acknowledging that our actions were still constricted, due to our situatedness within a hegemonic institutional context.

To this end, building a beloved community in the classroom required us to engage with humanizing pedagogy rooted in love (King, 1957; hooks, 1995), imagination (Kelley, 2002), critical hope (Freire, 1992; Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and radical healing (Ginwright, 2010). The underlying essence between these ways of being and acting was that they all honored process, uncertainty, vulnerability, and unfinishedness. By honoring the process of building a beloved community we pushed back on neoliberal discourse and practices that attempted to dehumanize us and dispossess us. In a small way, as a classroom community situated within a U.S. schooling system that reproduces systems of oppression for the gross economic accumulation by the economic elite, we pushed back and cultivated the very dispositions and practices that they attempt to take from us. As discussed in the findings, we cultivated: love for others and ourselves; relationships built on trust and hope; and community rooted in supporting academic and emotional growth for each other and ourselves.

*Tenet Two – Redefining Dominant and Hegemonic Systems*

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*Phase Two – Cultivating a Critical Consciousness*

Phase Two was guided by Tenet Two of CRP-Ed, *Redefining dominant and hegemonic systems* which attends to a commitment toward naming and transforming hegemonic contexts informed by a critical consciousness. Therefore, this tenet builds on Freire's notion of critical consciousness and the naming of hegemonic spaces, thus recognizing the potential to contribute toward dismantling institutional racism and systems of oppression. Ginwright posited that he used, "the term [critical consciousness] to convey how an awareness of the systematic forms of oppression builds the capacity for self-determination to take action to address social and community problems" (Ginwright, 2010, p. 17). As demonstrated in the findings, students cultivated their critical consciousness and pushed back on oppressive discourse. Within the constraints of a standards-based science classroom, this meant strategically seeking ways to work alongside my students in facilitating a space of distress where we situated ourselves in the contradictions rooted in the push and pull between oppressive texts and the cultivation of anti-oppressive discourse. During Phase Two, we demonstrated our willingness to take a painful look at the White male dominated narratives celebrated in our state-adopted textbook. Students named who was missing from our state-mandated science textbook, aligned their understandings with systems of oppression at the institutional level, and grappled with the contradictions of what we were required to learn, which held partial truths. In this sense, our classroom community cultivated knowledge that pushed back on the dominant narrative which required us to hold a space of pain together. During these times, when we acknowledged the stories by oppressed groups that went untold,

required us to voice as a community our situatedness within an unjust institution. Consequently, our classroom community embraced this space of distress, and cultivated anti-oppressive discourse rooted in critical consciousness and the hope for racial/social justice.

In essence, naming and reframing the dominant narrative relied on the counterstories of racialized and/or marginalized groups. Aligned with the assumptions of Tenet Two, the findings illustrated the ways in which we practiced our contestation as situated-advocacy toward the formation of equitable and humanizing classroom practices. Tenet Two acknowledges that dominant cultural narratives are driven by commonsense thinking and practices, and as reflected in the findings, our classroom community agitated and troubled the common sense thinking and practices controlled and monitored by neoliberal thinking, policies and practices. For example, as discussed in detail in Chapter One of this study, both *efficiency through market – based reform* and *deficit ways of thinking about students and teachers* are neoliberal frames which have gained public support, thereby justifying aggressive neoliberal practices on the ground, which Harvey (2003) described as, "accumulation by dispossession."

By cultivating counter-narratives as a classroom community, we pushed back on neoliberal thinking and practices and developed new anti-neoliberal frames rooted in action and reflection – praxis, which supported us in naming the word and the world (Freire, 1970). In doing so, we defined for ourselves the purpose of schooling and who we were. As shown in the findings, students identified themselves collectively as "a family," "co-researchers," and "a beloved community." They named their individual identities, acknowledging themselves as, "beautiful," "hard working," "smart," and "perfect." They also honored their individual and collective identity while simultaneously naming institutional racism, toxic

environmental practices, and asked for example, "what is there to gain other than money?" (Student work, December, 2015). The findings also highlighted the cultivation of critical consciousness, which emerged in Phase Two, thus shifting students from the recognition of their agency toward demonstrating their agency through discourse. As documented through a video recording, Gina's quote was a prime example of the discourse that had begun to take shape in our classroom, when she stated, "We need to do something about this, it's not right" (Video recording, November, 2015).

In doing so, our classroom community pushed back on "The oppressor consciousness [which] tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of domination. The earth, property, production, the creation of people, people themselves, time–everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal" (Freire, 1993, p. 58). For example, students pushed back on the dominant narrative, and questioned the state-mandated textbook. One prime example includes the ways in which our classroom community challenged the dominant narrative that was normalized by means of our textbook, and in response named and reframed the dominant narrative. By mutually engaging in these practices, we cultivated relationships while simultaneously developing an understanding of why we at times acted in contradictory ways that were not aligned with our hopes and desires. As reflected in many of the quotes in Chapter Four, the students troubled the White-male dominated text, critiqued who was missing from the curriculum, and connected the marginalization of oppressed groups to systemic inequities, while simultaneously acknowledging that, "Sometimes I look at my textbook different because only white males are in it when I feel like no matter what gender/race you can do what you want for the world and get honored for it. Not just one gender or race" (Luis, Journal Entry, November, 2015).

The cultivation of knowledge and critical consciousness through the critical analysis of marginalizing text, supported students in recognizing that racist and sexist practices were rooted in institutionalized systems of oppression and began to cultivate discourse that pushed back on the dominant narrative. What emerged was the "cultivation of pedagogy" in spaces of distress, where the push and pull between cultivation and dispossession was embraced and new forms of teaching and learning rooted in the generative production of knowledge was embraced. As our classroom community situated ourselves in spaces of distress, we pushed back on neoliberal thinking and practices rooted in the "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003) and carved out a space for the collective "pedagogy by cultivation."

Students' agency through discourse was also demonstrated during both the Genetics, Race, and Institutional Racism project and GMOs project. Students were able to name vertical systems of oppression and in turn discuss how systems of oppression played out vertically. As illustrated in the findings, students named horizontal forms of oppression naming, "Institutional Racism/White Privilege." The following three brief quotes below reflect the critical discourse which was cultivated by our classroom community. Students posited that, "many people don't care about anyone's feelings but the whites" and "the opportunities you have/ money you make often will depend on your race," and "it's all about providing the future for whites on the backs of people of color."

Students (Student Work, 2015) also named vertical forms of oppression, including, "horizontal violence," asking, "Why white people act like people of color don't have feelings? Why people think it's okay to treat one another horribly?" and stating that, "Some people are abused because based on how they look others don't care because race doesn't efect them," and "How people think your dangerous or have crazy ideas in their head if your

Mexican." The students' quotes above are prime examples from the findings in Phase Two which reflected students' agency through discourse. Students named the ways in which their lived experiences were impacted by systems of oppression and began problematizing their current situatedness.

Lastly, the cultivation of knowledge and critical consciousness situated our classroom community in spaces of distress because they began experiencing tensions due to their recognition of the differing positionalities in our classroom in relationship to race, class, and gender. As highlighted in the findings, students felt discomfort in relationship to talking about race in a multi-racial classroom, "because there are different races here in this class" (Student work, 2015). In essence, students felt discomfort, but we understood that situating ourselves in this space of distress was a responsibility we were willing to embrace because as a beloved community, we had developed the hope for justice. As reflected in the findings, majority of students, although they mentioned feeling uncomfortable, stated they we willing to hold this space together. Within this context, having the familiarity and trust with working in and through the tensions supported our classroom community to shift these tensions toward institutional change rooted in collectively working toward transforming the unhealthy practices they recognized at our school site. In the pages ahead, Phase Three reflects the ways in which students moved from the recognition of their agency in Phase One, toward utilizing their agency through discourse in Phase Two, leading to students practicing their agency collectively through action, in Phase Three.

Students' cultivation of knowledge also developed in different ways throughout the three phases documented in this study. For example, students' cultivation of knowledge shifted from countering dominant narratives rooted in the "accumulation by dispossession,"

(Harvey, 2003) toward cultivating knowledge and relationships rooted in love, service to community, and transformation. Below, I discuss the ways in which our classroom community honored Tenet Three of CRP-Ed, "research as a dialectical space" by engaging in a multilayered process that utilized PAR and tsPAR while guided by a CRP-Ed lens.

*Tenet Three – Research as a Dialectical Space*

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*Phase Three – Engaging with Participatory Action Research*

Phase Three of the findings, was guided by Tenet Three of CRP–Ed, *Research as a dialectical space*. This tenet acknowledges the racist legacy of research that historically (and currently) perpetuated racist polices, practices, and hierarchies through what Bonilla-Silva termed, *white methods*. This tenet starts with the assumption that scholars conducting research toward social justice today are working within a hegemonic context shaped by oppressive thinking and practices. Furthermore, this tenet posits that if the research is conducted in uncritical ways, it may unintentionally contribute toward the affirmation of a racialized and/or social hierarchy. In acknowledging the underlying assumptions of Tenet Three, tsPAR buildings on PAR/yPAR by acknowledging the ways in which the "liberatory process" of PAR was situated within a hegemonic context (public school classroom) and in turn had the potential to be co-opted if not engaged with in critical ways. Therefore, below I revisit the 9 principles of tsPAR. tsPAR was the methodological process which was utilized for the purposes of this study, while guided by a CRP–Ed lens. The 9 principles of tsPAR are as follows:

Principle 1: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto their relationship (between students, and students and teacher) while naming/documenting: the tensions, contradictions, possibilities and/or constraints that arise/exist.

Principle 2: The students and teacher intentionally turn their lens onto systems of oppression (classroom/school/community) while naming/documenting the tensions, contradictions, and/or constraints that arise/exist.

Principle 3: The teacher acknowledges that the PAR study the students engage with, (although developed, designed, and conducted by the students) is a course requirement and not a choice (and therefore contradictory to principles of PAR), and is part of their enrollment in a course.

Principle 4: While following the principles of tsPAR, the teacher honors the students' identified problem and works alongside the local community throughout: the methodological process of their PAR study (including teaching the process of PAR, providing support and resources, etc.); the development and dissemination of the local community's project; and acknowledges that tsPAR intersects the local community's PAR project in contradictory ways.

Principle 5: The teacher acknowledges the constraints, contradictions, and limitations of the "subject-subject" relationship and chooses not to seek the students' participation in the development of research questions and data collection instruments, data collection, and analysis toward a dissertation, beyond the students' local PAR project. Additionally, the teacher does not seek the participation of the local community's analysis that is in support of the teacher's advancement of a document (e.g. dissertation, thesis, scholarly article/book chapter), which an institution does not allow shared authorship by the students. The teacher

acknowledges that due to differing positionalities, asking students to engage in such work is complicated by the student and teacher relationship, regardless of the critical work being done to dismantle power dynamics.

Principle 6: The teacher acknowledges that the PAR project is conceived of, developed and framed within a classroom and that they influence intentionally and unintentionally the students' PAR project. Therefore, the teacher documents the ways in which their involvement impacted the students' study. This impact includes researcher influence, power dynamics, tensions that arose, possibilities, and how participation alongside students impacted the teacher.

Principle 7: The teacher acknowledges that at least three different research dynamics will occur simultaneously while engaging with tsPAR, including: 1) the students' engagement with PAR which honors students as co-researchers with one-another; 2) the teacher conducting research *on* the students they teach and learn with, while engaged in a PAR project together; and 3) investigating the first two principles of tsPAR, wherein, both the students and teacher dynamic and processing of tensions are documented and analyzed by the teacher and informed by both the students and the teacher.

Principle 8: The teacher acknowledges that teaching and learning alongside students while documenting the tsPAR process supports pushing back on the neoliberal agenda/oppressive policies and practices and simultaneously contradicts the "subject-subject" relationship by perpetuating dominant cultural practices due to the oppressive and constricting context of schooling and the power dynamics in the teacher/student relationship.

Principle 9: The teacher acknowledges that although tsPAR contradicts the "subject-subject" relationship, engaging in the process critically generates the potential to dismantle oppressive

policies and practices through naming the tensions, contradictions and constraints therefore supporting a humanizing process rooted in hope, possibilities, and transformation.

When facilitating and engaging with students on their PAR projects, I was consistently revisiting the principles of tsPAR, in addition to the tenets of CRP–Ed. In this way, there were two methodological processes occurring simultaneously. I was facilitating and supporting five different PAR projects developed and practiced by my students in five different class periods, while simultaneously engaging in tsPAR for the purposes of exploring the two sub questions of this study: "To what extent can our classroom community honor the principles of tsPAR and the tenets of CRP-Ed while simultaneously negotiating with and pushing back on state and federally mandated science standards?" and "To what extent can our classroom community honor the principles of tsPAR and the tenets of CRP-Ed while simultaneously negotiating with and pushing back on state and federally mandated science standards?"

Therefore, naming and grappling with the contradictions and partiality of this research process was a crucial component of minimizing the perpetuation of oppressive research practices. In other words, as discussed in Tenet Three of CRP–Ed, strategically employing research methods toward racial/social justice requires a critique of hegemonic systems and practices and the research process itself. Therefore, working within institutional constraints, while informed by a critical consciousness, required approaching the research process in strategic ways that honored decolonizing methods of research (Smith, 1999).

As demonstrated in the findings, students' development of their PAR problems and research questions were a direct result of the GMOs project we engaged with. At the same time, what they named and worked toward transforming was also a direct result of their lived

experiences. In this sense, as their science teacher, I worked toward cultivating a space alongside my students to engage with PAR in a standards-based classroom, while simultaneously having to justify students' engagement with PAR in a science classroom.

Therefore, the problems that students named and engaged with were rooted in the cultivation of knowledge by our classroom community shaped by both institutional constraints and the PAR process. Thus, having awareness of the contradictions and tensions that arise in such work, while challenging dominant narratives and advocating for racial/social justice within spheres of influence where dominant narratives are privileged, required our classroom community to shift our strategies depending on institutional constraints and expansions (while being mindful and minimizing the reproduction or contribution toward dominant narratives). In other words, as asserted in Tenet Three of CRP–Ed, this requires having an activist agenda and understanding the hegemonic space and audience within which the research questions are situated and being strategic about the potential impact of the findings. Simultaneously, it required honoring the mutual advocacy efforts by impacted communities, grassroots organizations, students, and/or scholars working toward racial and or social justice from different spaces.

In acknowledging research as a dialectical space, the principles of tsPAR evoked approaching the facilitation of students' PAR projects with a critical lens. More specifically, the process was rooted in action and reflection in relationship to the ways in which our classroom community's engagement from differing positionalities and roles influenced the development of the PAR projects. In other words, during the process, we consistently checked in with each other in order to reflect on the ways in which my role as their teacher, facilitator, and support system impacted their engagement with their PAR projects, in

addition to their relationships with each other. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the ways in which students engagement with PAR inspired the cultivation of knowledge, cultivation of relationships, and students' agency as demonstrated in the findings. In addition, the ways in which students' agency was cultivated in different ways during Phase One, Phase Two, and Phase Three of this study is summarized. Furthermore, I reflect on the findings and the ways in which my work alongside students, situated within institutional constraints, influenced the PAR process in a standards-based science classroom. Lastly, I discuss the ways in which the five emergent themes demonstrated the ways in which our classroom community "cultivated pedagogy" and consequently pushed back on neoliberal ideology and practices, which Harvey (2005) defined as, "the accumulation by dispossession."

As posited by Ginwright (2010), radical healing requires, "building the capacity of young people to act upon their environment in ways that contribute to the common good. This process contributes to individual wellbeing, community health, and broader social justice, whereby young people can act on the behalf of others with hope, joy and a sense of possibility" (p. 8). Thus, throughout the GMOs project, students cultivated knowledge and contributed toward the GMO debate. Subsequently, by problematizing their current situatedness, students identified the toxic practices at our school site in relationship to their distaste for Monsanto, processed foods, and the lack of access to health education. As demonstrated in the findings, their dispositions in relationship to agency transformed from acknowledging their agency in Phase One, to demonstrating their agency through discourse in Phase Two, and consequently, utilizing their agency with on-the-ground action for school change.

Students embraced their agency and took action in order to contribute toward school change. To this end, radical healing evoked hope and inspired the possibilities for our classroom community to dream of something new (Kelley, 2002). In essence, as demonstrated in the findings, our classroom community (which represented five different class periods) contributed toward transforming their school site due to their concern for the health of our school community and broader environmental concerns as well. For example, students' cultivation of knowledge and agency was demonstrated in the ways in which they provided access to health education/foods in multiple ways in service to their school community. As discussed in the findings, students cultivated pedagogy by 1) providing "healthy tips" on a weekly basis, 2) developing a health website, 3) working toward the potential ban on the sales of plastic water bottles on our school site (in progress), 4) possibly getting healthy vending machines on our campus (in progress) and, 5) developing a gardening elective proposal, which they presented to the school board and is now an official elective for students at our middle school to access during the 2016-17 school year.

Throughout the process of tsPAR, we engaged in discourse about the ways in which power relations were negotiated during the PAR process. The findings during Phase Three, showed the ways in which students felt they were the authentic developers of their projects. Students defined themselves as "agents of change," "researchers," and "scientists," and simultaneously demonstrated the ways in which they had cultivated an awareness of self and others by acting on behalf of themselves and their broader school community. The findings also reflected they ways in which students had cultivated healthy personal identities in addition to identifying as a collective.

Paradoxically, students also named their current situatedness, by naming the power dynamics that continued to shape their experiences while working alongside me during their PAR projects. The findings illustrated the ways in which students felt that I "allowed" and "let" them speak or share their ideas. The contradictory nature of PAR situated within an oppressive hegemonic context, reflects the ways in which our current situatedness within a hegemonic context at both the micro and macro levels were not dismantled. At the same time, collectively working in spaces of distress and cultivating loving and trusting relationships, afforded us the imagination to cultivate pedagogy and engage with PAR in the classroom beyond the constraints and directives that attempted to dehumanize us and keep us apart.

Furthermore, engaging with humanizing pedagogy through a CRP–Ed lens while engaging with tsPAR, as illustrated throughout all three phases in the findings section, evoked the "cultivation of pedagogy." More specifically, humanizing pedagogy (theoretical framework for this study) was practiced through: 1) the building of a beloved community, 2) the cultivation of critical consciousness, and 3) the engagement with PAR, all of which inspired our classroom community to contribute toward the development of a framework that aligns with and speaks to CRP–Ed and tsPAR in standards-based classrooms, which the emergent themes inspired – "Cultivating Pedagogy."

Therefore, the next section in this chapter offers implications for students and teachers in practice, implications for science teachers, followed by implications for educational researchers with the hopes of contributing meaningful insight toward the ways in which to cultivate pedagogy and research with the vision of redefining the purpose of schooling and who we are. I end this chapter reflecting on the ways in which this study

contributes toward problematizing research within constricting institutional spaces and discuss the potential for a new conceptual framework that builds on the theoretical framework which guided the underlying assumptions for this study, and was developed by our classroom community guided by a CRP–Ed lens while engaging with tsPAR – Cultivating Pedagogy.

## Implications

### Implications for Students and Teachers in k–12 Public School Classrooms

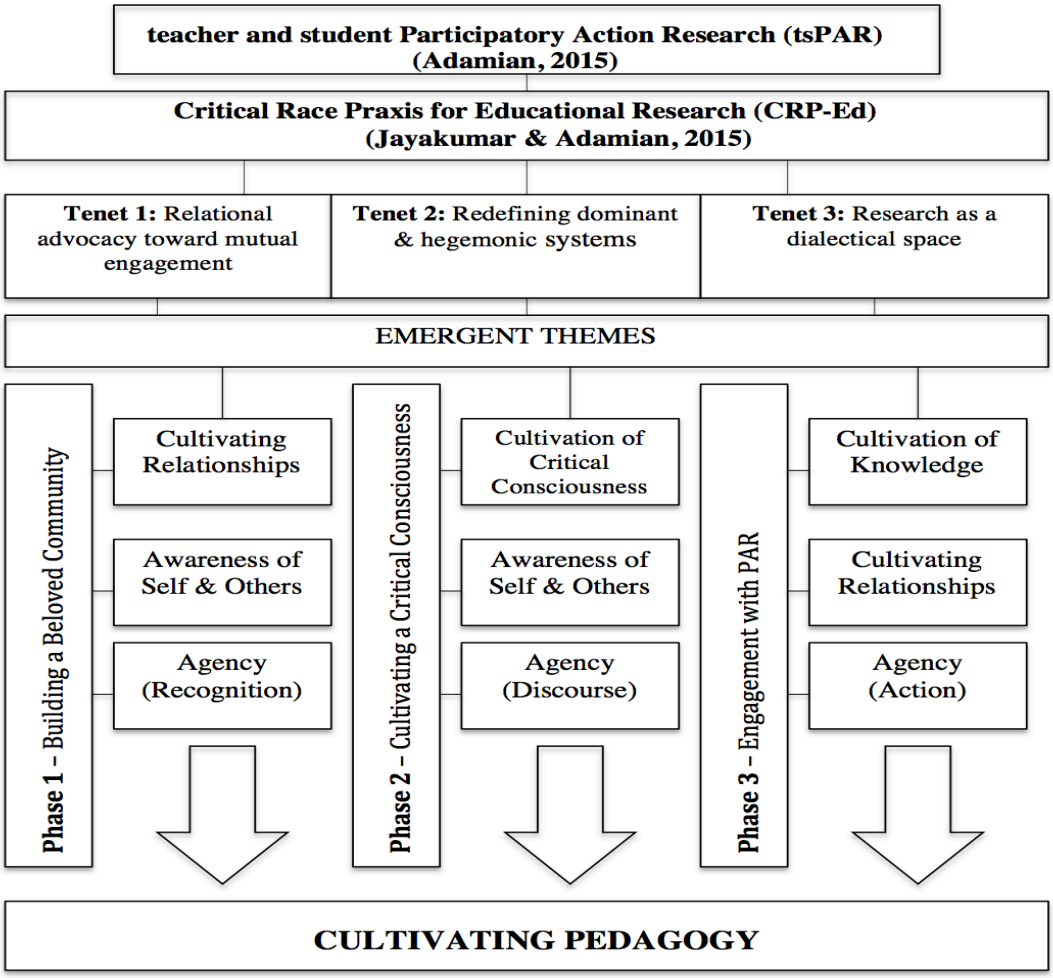
This section draws on the multilayered process our classroom community engaged with, by discussing the implications for students and teachers engaging with five pedagogical community practices that support working collectively toward cultivating pedagogy in public school classrooms, followed by the implications for educational research. This chapter concludes with a discussion of a new framework, which I named, cultivating pedagogy.

Cultivating pedagogy is a framework that emerged during the time of this study, after my analysis of the emergent themes. Cultivating pedagogy is a praxis-based framework that developed through our classroom community's mutual engagement with tsPAR, while guided by a CRP-Ed lens. In essence, we imagined a humanizing form of schooling that we wanted to experience and moved toward its reality. The title of this study, *A Moving Imagination in Spaces of Distress,* reflects how our collective movement supported us in transforming our own lives and our school site toward a more humanizing, healthy, loving, and conscious space, while simultaneously negotiating with state and federally mandated standards.

*Figure 4* below revisits and illustrates our process toward cultivating pedagogy, followed by the implications for teachers and students that were co-created by our classroom

community while simultaneously moving at the speed of pain[11]. The practices that we co-created which speak to cultivating pedagogy included the following five practices: awareness of self and others, cultivating relationships, cultivation of critical consciousness, cultivation of knowledge, and agency.

*Figure 4.* Cultivating Pedagogy




[11] Moving at the speed of pain means we act on our current situatedness and move from a space of numbness and survival, toward feeling and agency. Reflecting on our painful pasts and current situatedness requires engaging in the difficult task of confronting the painful realities of oppression. As we collectively develop the capacities to name and feel our pain that is rooted in oppression, dispossession, and violence – me move with love toward liberation, cultivation, and imagine new possibilities while healing from the circumstances we were conditioned to live in while collectively moving toward liberation.

**Awareness of self and others.** Students and teachers mutually engage in classroom practices where they:

- Examine their biases and assumptions about themselves and others, by situating themselves in the historical, personal, and collective realities of oppression and working in and through the tensions and contradictions, while simultaneously negotiating with standards-based curriculum.
- Honor the lived experiences and contributions of oppressed communities. More specifically, students and teachers humanize and honor oppressed communities as a "normal" part of the curriculum by troubling the dominant cultural narrative and practices that have been normalized and reproduced in U.S. public schools.
- Work toward loving themselves and in turn, love others even more, by collectively examining the ways in which our thinking and actions contradict our capacity to feel and connect to our humanity individually and collectively. As a result, our actions shift toward cultivating pedagogy that honors our relationships and knowledge, as opposed to reproducing oppressive thinking and practices.
- Work toward healing from all forms of violence (self, others, and systems of oppression), by working collectively on healing from horizontal and vertical violence that emerge due to oppressive thinking, policies, and practices.

**Cultivating relationships.** Students and teachers mutually engage in classroom practices where they:

- Build trust, collective identity, and care for and with each other. In doing so, students and teachers engage in the difficult, painful, and oftentimes contradictory

work of building relationships in institutional contexts that uphold individualism, racialized capitalism, and dehumanizing practices and policies.

- Build a beloved community that centers racial and/or social justice at the core of their relationships. In this sense, students and teachers mutually engage with naming oppressive thinking, policies, and practices, while simultaneously building trust, and honoring our own and each others full complexities with a collective purpose toward transforming our current situatedness (e.g. oppressive schooling conditions).
- Name the tensions, power dynamics, and work in and through spaces of distress. For example, students and teachers embrace the space in–between the push and pull between oppression and liberation, by moving at the speed of pain toward co-creating a humanizing space that honors teachers and students' identities, oppressed communities, and the building of a beloved community.

**Cultivation of Critical Consciousness.** Students and teachers mutually engage in classroom practices where they:

- Name the dominant cultural narrative and develop new anti-neoliberal frames. For example, we redefine the purpose of schooling and who we are, by shifting the narrative from blame and dehumanization, toward collective agency and the capacity to cultivate knowledge, love, and new schooling practices that honor our humanity.
- Examine oppression and cultivate anti-neoliberal practices by engaging in discussions about oppression and problematizing our situatedness, thus moving

toward humanizing practices that honor our identities and collective movement toward liberation.

- Cultivate love of self and honor the legacies that oppose all forms of systems/ideologies rooted in oppression (colonialism, neoliberalism, capitalism, etc.).

**Cultivation of Knowledge.** Students and teachers mutually engage in classroom practices where they:

- Cultivate knowledge collectively by problematizing their current situatedness (e.g. oppressive thinking and practices), therefore co-creating new forms of knowledge that honor liberating practices and new ideas with the hopes of contributing toward the transformation of oppressive schooling conditions.
- Co-create anti-neoliberal pedagogical practices (e.g. social, emotional, and academic).
- Collectively create and contribute local knowledge that transforms oppressive classroom, schooling, and/or community practices.
- Cultivate knowledge that troubles systems of oppression, while simultaneously contributing new ideas and insights that honor our humanity and support our work toward reaching our full potential.

**Agency – Recognition, Discourse, and Action.** Students and teachers mutually engage in classroom practices where they:

- Recognize and honor their personal and collective agency and the agency of

others through action and reflect – praxis (Freire, 1970).

- Engage collectively in anti-neoliberal discourse that troubles and/or dismantles the dominant cultural narrative, by critically examining and critiquing the dominant cultural narrative and co-creating new stories that move our imagination toward the realities of liberation.
- Engage in collective on-the-ground action that transforms harmful and/or oppressive schooling conditions. For example, students and teachers participate in PAR projects that are student-centered and problematize their lived experiences, which speak to the classroom community's immediate realties, hopes, and needs.

## Implications for Educational Researchers

Critical Race Praxis for Educational Research (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015)

Yamamoto (1997) asserted that, "Critical race praxis combines critical, pragmatic, socio-legal analysis with political lawyering and community organizing to practice justice by and for racialized communities" (p. 829). When applied in the space of educational research and more specifically to tsPAR, the aim of critical race praxis then works "to build solidarity among groups that work in different spaces, capacities, and positionalities with a shared commitment toward racial justice" (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015, p. 34).

Therefore, drawing from critical race praxis (see Yamamoto, 1997) and extending critical race praxis to include educational researchers requires strategic maneuvering that consistently strives to acknowledge and grapple with the tensions that exist within the hegemonic spaces that anti-oppressive work seeks to inform. Troubling the ways in which educational scholars approach research, means engaging with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice, while honoring the knowledge and voices of local

communities and simultaneously naming the spaces of distress that we work in and through together (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015).

The tenets of CRP-Ed are, "driven by hope and possibilities, while acknowledging the difficult task of inspiring mutual engagement across different positionalities (e.g., political lawyers, institutional practitioners, educational researchers, grassroots activists) and intersectionalities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality)" (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015, p. 36). Therefore, educational researchers can mutually engage across sectors and/or positionalities by utilizing the four guiding tenets of CRP-Ed which including: 1) Relational advocacy toward mutual engagement, 2) Redefining dominant and hegemonic systems, 3) Research as a dialectical space and 4) Critical engagement with policy (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015). Below are the implications for educational research, and the ways in which educational researchers can mutually engage in humanizing research for greater advocacy toward social and/or racial justice in constricting institutional contexts. Educational researchers engage in research that:

- Troubles the ways in which educational scholars approach research, while engaging with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice,
- Responds to how a mutual engagement across different positionalities are navigated while working toward building anti-hegemonic relationships, and being mindful of the contradictions and tensions across advocacy contexts (e.g. educational researchers, teachers, students, and institutions).
- Names and grapples with the contradictions and partiality of our research, therefore minimizing the perpetuation of oppressive/or dehumanizing research practices. Therefore, strategically employing research methods toward

racial/social justice requires a critique of hegemonic systems and practices and the research process itself.

- Name systems of oppression, while engaging in a multilayered approach that acknowledges moments of discomfort, while simultaneously recognizing moments of negotiation, contradiction, struggle, and resistance that challenges the dominant narrative/practices across different spheres of influence.
- Acknowledge that while working within the constraints of institutions that reproduce systems of oppression, collectively (e.g. teachers, students, educational researchers, local communities, grassroots organizations) working toward dismantling oppressive policies and practices with a critical consciousness requires naming the constraints and strategically working in the constraints while simultaneously working toward redefining them.

Engaging with Teacher and Student Participatory Action Research (tsPAR) (Adamian, 2015) within constricting institutional contexts urges teachers and students engaged in educational research to:

- Trouble and problematize how students and teachers engage with PAR while working within oppressive and constrictive institutions while mindful of cooptation.
- Contribute research toward the ways in which students and teachers negotiate PAR in a standards-based classroom.

- Intentionally turn their lens onto their relationship (between students, and students and teacher) while naming/documenting: the tensions, contradictions, possibilities and/or constraints that arise/exist.
- Intentionally turn their lens onto systems of oppression (classroom/school/community) while naming/documenting the tensions, contradictions, and/or constraints that arise/exist.
- Honor the relationships between students and students and students and teachers.
- Collectively engage in spaces of distress (see p. 99 of this study).
- Utilize the nine principles of tsPAR (see p. 187 of this study).

**Conclusion**

Engaging with the methodological process of tsPAR guided by a CRP-Ed lens, not only supported our classroom community in navigating our immediate circumstances, but also provided us future means of creatively embarking on situations we have not yet confronted or know about. Thus, embracing collective and individual agency in multiple ways (e.g. recognition, discourse, and action) contributed toward reframing the purpose of schooling and who we are. In this sense, this study honored our collective knowledge both from a historical context, as historical beings, and as current change agents acting on our world in the present – toward a renaming of ourselves that cherished our collective relationships, individual selves, and our dignity. More specifically, we redefined neoliberal thinking and practices rooted in "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003), by carving out a space for "cultivating pedagogy."

Neoliberalism relies on habits of mind rooted in deficit thinking, thus supporting

policies at the federal, state and local-level that grossly underfund, underserve, and then ultimately seize public spaces for profit. Consequently, misguided policies place the blame on teachers and students for the pitfalls of a capitalist system; justifying the systematic takeover of the public schools that are predominantly attended by students of color (Buras, 2013). When oppressive educational policies and neoliberal ideology merge, a relentless assault on public schools occurs – corporatizing one of the very few public spaces we have left in the U.S. Neoliberalism is only successful by means of redistribution of wealth, not due to the generation of wealth (Harvey, 2005). In this sense, neoliberalism relies on, "the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; [and] colonial, neocolonial, and imperial process of appropriation of assets (including natural resources)" (Harvey, 2005, p. 159). In essence, standardization and statistical research frames education "within the discourse of neoliberalism…construing the public good as a private good and the needs of the corporate and private sector as the only source of investment" and consequently dehumanizes students and teachers (Giroux, 2004, para. 6).

Cultivating pedagogy contributes toward redefining neoliberal thinking and policies that impact schooling conditions and emerged from our building of a beloved community, while mutually engaging in the cultivation of knowledge, critical consciousness, and loving relationships for the purposes of co-creating humanizing and transformative practices in our classroom and our school site that honored our identities. We did so, while simultaneously contributing toward our larger struggle for liberation. Therefore, cultivating pedagogy honors the ways in which students and teachers co-create knowledge and transformative practices in order to experience humanizing pedagogy in the classroom. Additionally, it honors our relationships and our agency now, as opposed to a future possibility.

In some ways, cultivating pedagogy builds on humanizing pedagogy (e.g. theoretical framework for this study) because it is rooted in movement, and develops through a mutual engagement across differing positionalities while working in a constricting institutional context. In this sense, to cultivate pedagogy collectively, requires working in spaces of distress and recognizing that the cultivation of pedagogy exists in–between the binary of liberation that we envision, and the oppression that we live in.

To this end, at the root of cultivating pedagogy is the building of a beloved community that reflects the love, courage, passion, and purpose toward collectively embracing our humanity and acting on our struggle for liberation. The relationships we build cannot be coopted, defined by the dominant cultural narrative, or dispossessed. The practice of cultivating pedagogy honors students and teachers that are working together day in and day out in an oppressive U.S. schooling system that attempts to reproduce systems of oppression, dehumanize us, and define our worth based solely by our labor.

By cultivating pedagogy in spaces of distress, our classroom community's work did not counter oppressive practices; instead our work resided in the spaces in–between liberation and oppression, where we cultivated new forms of knowledge, capacities, and understandings while moving at the speed of pain. As we held these spaces of pain collectively, teaching and learning became at act of love. What I mean is, when we felt the pain of oppression, when we felt the pain of not loving ourselves, when we felt the pain of not loving others, were the moments we imagined new possibilities and in turn, acted on our current situatedness. By holding these spaces of distress together, we are able to move with love, toward transforming our immediate circumstances, while simultaneously contributing in a small way toward dismantling larger systems of oppression. To this end, our collective

imagination moves us toward envisioning new possibilities for liberation, while simultaneously cultivating pedagogy today. Our collective actions, cultivate new images of what living in a liberated world may be and what will come to be, a just–us.

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APPENDIX
Appendix A: Students' Gardening Proposal
(Approved by School Board March 23, 2016)

**Administrative Offices**
1163 E. Seventh Street
Chico, CA 95928-5999

530 / 891-3000
fax: 891-3220
www.chicousd.org

**New Course Proposal Outline**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Course Title:** | Gardening |
| **Grade Level:** | 6th, 7th, and 8th |
| **Required/Elective:** | Elective |
| **Length/Credits:** | Semester |
| **Prerequisites:** | None |

**I. Course Rationale and Description:**

The gardening elective will benefit our school financially, esthetically, and morally. First of all, the elective will support students at our school with fresh organic foods, while receiving an education at the same time. Also, this elective will provide the school with color and variety. Furthermore, the gardening elective will allow students to grow their own food. Overall, this elective would provide fresh natural foods for the school, provide a proper education on plants, and be an elective that would keep students active while making our school a much healthier place.

**This course will provide students:**

- Knowledge for those that don't know where food comes from.
- Responsibility.
- Foods that are natural and healthy for the school so everyone can be healthier.
- Knowledge about plants, how to grow their own food, and can provide the school with color and natural foods.
- Inspire students to grow their own plants.
- Learn about agriculture early and prepare for college.

**This course will prepare students:**

- To help them make food.
- With skills to have access to foods and become self-sufficient.
- In the future when they may want to grow their own food or supply it for others.
- With more activities and it is an outdoor activity.
- To learn to make healthy/home grown fruits and vegetables.
- With how plants grow.
- With knowing the difference between GMO and organic vegetables and fruits.
- If they want to eat healthier.
- For the responsibility of having to take care of things, which is a vital thing to have in life.

**This course will benefit students:**

- Plant education.
- Learn how to garden.
- Learn to take care of living things.
- Working outside in an active environment.
- Surrounding students with a healthier environment and knowledge about plants, including how to grow them.
- Teaching students how to grow and care for plants.
- Help students know what we are eating.
- Students will be more proud of their school.
- It will benefit the students who aren't in the gardening elective too by getting fresh natural foods.

**This course will benefit the school:**

- Make school more colorful, interesting, and surprising.
- Increased student engagement.
- It can also provide our foods (cooking) elective with food.
- A cleaner, healthier environment, which will consist of more colorful surroundings, and supply fresh healthy food choices to the cafeteria's menus. Overall, it will make Bidwell a safer, healthier school for all of its students and staff.
- Providing a free food source, a more vibrant looking campus, and it shows how Bidwell is a healthy place which helps our school gain more popularity among the community.
- It will provide the school with another elective for our incoming 6th graders.
- School will have more greenery.

**II. Instructional and Supplemental Materials:**

**Approved Core Instructional Materials:** Texts to be determined.

**Supplemental Materials:** Supplies and Resources: School Garden Checklist (letsmove.gov; Office of State Superintendent of Education); Lifelab.org; Collective School Garden Network; Farm to School; Butte County Master Gardener; UC extension

**Access and Equity:** Raised flower/garden beds, wheelchair accessible pathways, modified tools, and access to educational materials.

**III. Course Outline/Standards/ Instructional Methods/Assessments:**

Prepare a course outline that indicates the following: 1) name of unit; 2) time allocated for the unit; 3) standards addressed in each unit (please use Content Standards Framework numbering system and write out each standard); 4) Instructional strategies used in each unit; 5) Assessments utilized. (Use additional pages as needed.)

| Unit Name | Standards Addressed | Time | | | Instructional Strategies | Assessments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduction to Gardening** | **G3.0** *Students understand plant physiology and growth principles* | **2 wks** | | | Diagrams (examples), stations, projects, visual aids, posters, reading, quick writes, hands-on, notes, labs/experiments | Models, whiteboards, diagrams, team test/tests, posters, quizzes, speeches/ presentations |
| **Plant & Soil Science** | **G6.0** *Students understand soils and plant production* **G8.0** *Students understand effective water management practices* | **4 wks** | | | Water labs/ experiments, group work, stations, class discussion, games, activities, whiteboards (vocab development), hands on, models, visual aids/pictures, writing | Team tests, lab tests (pictures/artifacts), quizzes, homework, posters |
| **Plant Reproduction & Development** | **G3.0** *Students understand plant physiology and growth principles* **G4.0** *Students understand sexual and asexual reproduction of plants* | **3 wks** | | | Hands-on, games, songs/plays, labs/experiments | Drawings, labs, projects, team tests |
| **Organic Farming Practices** | **G5.0** *Students understand pest problems and management* | **3 wks** | | **CAMPUS BEAUTIFICATION** | Activities, hands-on, whiteboards, labs/experiments, lecture/short lecture, games, examples, stations, interactive projects | Posters, drawings, whiteboards, experiments based on data known |
| **Crop Management** | **G10.0** *Students understand local crop management and production practices.* | **3 wks** | | | Pair share, Reading/Reading aloud, documentary videos, lecture, hands-on, diagrams, pictures, visuals | Team test, Posters, Presentations |
| **Agriculture Biology** | **G9.0** *Students understand the concept of an "agrosystem" approach to production* **G11.0** *Students understand plant biotechnology* | **3 wks** | **GARDENING** | | Activities, note taking, hands-on, whiteboards, group work, labs/experiments, games, songs/plays, drawings/pictures, models, class discussion, pair-share, stations, quick writes, visual aids/pictures | Projects, tests, pictures with labels, presentations, slide shows, posters, quizzes, reports |

**IV. Instructional Methods:** Please indicate instructional methods to be used for special needs students, including Special Education, English Language Learners, and Honors.
See (p. 3)

**V. Grading Policy:**

Final Grade: Grades will be assigned based on percentage of points earned:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A+** | 97 – 100% | **C+** | 77 – 79.9% |
| **A** | 94 – 96.9% | **C** | 74 – 76.9% |
| **A-** | 90 – 93.9% | **C-** | 70 – 73.9% |
| **B** | 87 – 89.9% | **D+** | 67 – 69.9% |
| **B+** | 84 – 86.9% | **D** | 64 – 66.9% |
| **B-** | 80 – 83.9% | **D-** | 60 – 63.9% |
| | | **F** | 0 – 59.9% |

Definitions of Grades:

**A-Superior Work:**
- A level of achievement so outstanding that it is normally attained by relatively few students.

**B-Very Good Work:**
- A high level of achievement clearly better than adequate competence in the subject matter/skill, but not as good as the unusual, superior achievement of students earning an A.

**C-Adequate Work:**
- A level of achievement indicating adequate competence in the subject matter/skill. This level will usually be met by a majority of students in the class.

**D-Minimally Acceptable Work:**
- A level of achievement which meets the minimum requirements of the course.

**F-Unacceptable Work:**
- A level of achievement that fails to meet the minimum requirements of the course. Not passing.

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**Aligned with State Frameworks: (X) Yes ( ) No**
**CSU/UC Requirement: ( ) Yes (x) No**
**Sites offered:** Bidwell Junior High School

**Chico Unified School District – Secondary New Course Proposal - Signature Page**

Course Title: _____ Gardening_____

Submitted by: 7th grade students at [redacted]_____

Department: _____Elective_____

School: _____[redacted] _____

Planned Start Date: _____ 2016-17 schoolyear _____

**Approvals (Signature & Date):**

***Dept. Chair/Admin. (High Schools)***

Chico High _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

PVHS _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Alt. Ed. _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Inspire _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

***Dept./Admin. (Jr. High)***

Bidwell _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Chico Jr. _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Marsh _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Alt. Ed. _____/_____ □ Approve □ Reject

Educational Services _____ □ Approve □ Reject

- If rejected, return to originator with rationale or conditions for approval.
- If approved, date taken to board of education for board approval:
- _____
- Board of Education action: □ Approve □ Reject