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CHAPTER 1

What Is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Why Does It Matter?

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Across the centuries, countless philosophers and teachers—and legions of students—have asked that age-old educational question: What is the purpose of schooling? In the context of the United States and other nation-states living out the legacies of genocide, land theft, enslavement, and various forms of colonialism, the answer to this question for communities of color has been rather clear: The purpose of state-sanctioned schooling has been to forward the largely assimilationist and often violent White imperial project, with students and families being asked to lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures, and histories in order to achieve in schools. In the United States and beyond, this saga of cultural and linguistic assault has had and continues to have devastating effects on the access, achievement, and well-being of students of color in public schools.

Continued social and educational inequality coupled with the massive demographic changes sweeping the United States and Europe, among other regions, have brought to the fore an urgent, more pressing iteration of this age-old question: What is the purpose of schooling *in pluralistic societies*? This has been the most important question for us over the past several years as we have worked to offer a needed change in stance and terminology in pedagogical theory and practice—*culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP; Alim & Paris, 2015; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation. CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling.

The more we write and think about CSP, the more we are convinced that we are dealing with fundamental questions about teaching and learning. At the same time, our theorizing has taken us far beyond the traditional kinds of questions that are commonly asked in much of education research, questions that too often obscure, confound, or remain silent on issues of systemic racial and intersectional inequalities that continue to be part of the fabric of schooling. In essence, by proposing schooling as a site for sustaining the cultural ways of being of communities of color rather than eradicating them, CSP is responding to the many ways that schools continue to function as part of the colonial project. We seek to disrupt the pervasive anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, and related anti-Brownness (from anti-*Latinidad* to Islamophobia) and model minority myths so foundational to schooling in the United States and many other colonial nation-states (Alexander, 2007; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; S. Lee, 2005; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Woodson, 2000).

In our work with CSP we begin matter-of-factly with the knowledge that our languages, literacies, histories, and cultural ways of being as people and communities of color are not pathological. Beginning with this understanding—an understanding fought for across the centuries (Kendi, 2016)—allows us to see the fallacy of measuring ourselves and the young people in our communities solely against White middle-class norms[1] of knowing and being that continue to dominate notions of educational achievement. Du Bois (1965), of course, theorized this well over a century ago with his conceptualization of *double consciousness*, "This sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 45). In this work we are committed to envisioning and enacting pedagogies that are not filtered through the glass of amused contempt and pity (e.g., the "achievement gap"), but rather are centered on contending in complex ways with the rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other youth and communities of color.

In our conceptualization of CSP, we have moved away from (sometimes even progressive) pedagogies that are too closely aligned with linguistic, literate, and cultural hegemony. Instead, we have worked with others to develop a pedagogical agenda that does not concern itself with the seemingly panoptic *White gaze* (Morrison, 1998) that permeates educational research and practice with and for students of color, their teachers, and their schools.[2] In a 1998 interview, Nobel laureate Toni Morrison responded to misguided critiques of her books with the rebuttal, "As though our lives have no meaning and no depth without the White gaze. And I have spent my entire writing life trying to make sure that the White gaze was not the dominant one in any of my books."

As we think about teaching and teachers, we ask: What would our pedagogies look like if this gaze (and the kindred patriarchal, cisheteronormative, English-monolingual, ableist, classist, xenophobic, Judeo-Christian

gazes)[3] weren't the dominant one? What would liberating ourselves from this gaze and the educational expectations it forwards mean for our abilities to envision new and recover community-rooted forms of teaching and learning? What if the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms, but rather was to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their cultural practices and investments?

We ask this question knowing that so-called educational "integration" has always framed success in terms of a unidirectional assimilation into whiteness (for example, as a result of *Brown v. Board of Education*, they weren't busing White students into Black neighborhoods and firing White teachers—see Walker, 2013). For Morrison, as soon as she jettisoned this White gaze, she found herself in a new territory that allowed for boundless creativity, a world of imagination and possibility. "This was brand-new space," she said, "and once I got there, it was like the whole world opened up, and I was never going to give that up." What kinds of transformative experiences can we offer our students, such that a "whole world" of learning opens up for them, one that, like Morrison, they would never want to give up (versus one that continually gives up on them)? What can educators of color and other educators in solidarity with us learn from Morrison's courage and conviction to de-center whiteness, to envision a world where we owed no explanations to White people about the value of our children's culture, language, and learning potential?[4]

It is important to note that in de-centering whiteness, we are not putting aside issues of (so-called) access and equity; we are reframing them. For too long, scholarship on "access" and "equity" has centered implicitly or explicitly around the White-gaze-centered question: How can "we" get "these" working-class kids of color to speak/write/be more like middle-class White ones (rather than critiquing the White gaze itself that sees, hears, and frames students of color in everywhichway as marginal and deficient)? For equally long, as Fairclough (1992) and Rosa and Flores (Chapter 10, this volume) have pointed out, much of additive scholarship has focused on the cultural and linguistic practices of our students, rather than the listening and framing practices of "Whitestream institutions" (Urrieta, 2010). We believe that equity and access can best be achieved by centering the dynamic practices and selves of students and communities of color in a critical, additive, and expansive vision of schooling. Instead of being oppressive, homogenizing forces, CSP asks us to reimagine schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but *sustained*. In fundamentally reimagining the purpose of education, CSP demands a critical, emancipatory vision of schooling that reframes the object of critique from our children to oppressive systems.

These are not just theoretical questions for us; our experiences as teachers of color deeply inform our work on CSP. We have been confronted with the racially discriminatory context of U.S. education our entire lives—first

as students and then as teachers. Between the two of us, we have participated in the complex and imperfect work of sustaining our students and communities through education for nearly forty years as elementary, middle school, high school, and now university educators. These experiences anchor our theorizing and our practice of culturally sustaining pedagogies.

LOVING CRITIQUES OF ASSET PEDAGOGIES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

As we continued to build from our own experiences as teachers and students, we came together to further conceptualize CSP in 2014 through a series of respectful and generative loving critiques of previous asset pedagogies, as we sought to problematize and extend three areas of scholarship and practice: (a) previous conceptualizations and enactments of asset pedagogies, (b) asset pedagogies that consider the longstanding practices of communities of color without taking into account contemporary enactments of communities, and (c) asset pedagogies that do not critically contend with problematic elements expressed in some youth (and adult) cultural practices. Below we trace and extend these loving critiques as we build toward the future of CSP.

Our first engagement is with previous conceptualizations and enactments of asset pedagogies, which begins with an understanding of the emergence of these necessary approaches to teaching and learning. Building on the court rulings of the 1960s and 1970s and the subsequent policies that required schools to attend to the languages (e.g., African American Language, Chinese, Navajo, Spanish) and (less so) cultures of communities of color (e.g., *Lau v. Nichols*, *Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District*)[5], collaborations between researchers and teachers proved that the deficit approaches to teaching and learning that had echoed across the decades (centuries, really) were untenable and unjust (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Moll, 1992; Smitherman, 1977). These deficit approaches viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling.

With this research as a foundation, asset pedagogies were enacted and understood in ever more complex ways by teachers and researchers throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s (Garcia, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; C. D. Lee, 1995; McCarty & Zepeda, 1995; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Nieto, 1992; Valdés, 1996). These revolutionary pedagogies repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities—specifically poor communities of color—as resources and assets to honor, explore, and extend in accessing White middle-class dominant cultural norms of acting and being that are demanded in schools.

One of the most important pedagogical statements of this asset pedagogies movement was Ladson-Billings's (1995) landmark article *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*. Indeed, the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP) has become ubiquitous in educational research circles and in teacher education programs.[6] This speaks to the lasting conceptual value of the term and, more importantly, Ladson-Billings's illumination of the concept through her work with successful teachers of African American students. We, like countless teachers and university-based researchers, continue to be inspired by what it means to make teaching and learning relevant to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices of students in our communities. And we understand our work with CSP as founded upon the original formulation of CRP. Indeed, as Ladson-Billings (2014) recently wrote, "culturally sustaining pedagogy uses culturally relevant pedagogy as the place where the beat drops" (p. 76).

Ladson-Billings's (1995) original formulation of CRP, where the "beat drops" for us, laid the groundwork for pedagogies that maintain the longstanding cultural practices of communities of color while students also learn to critique dominant power structures. And yet we believe that much of the work being done under the umbrella of CRP comes up far short of these goals. It is also true that the term "relevant" does not do enough to explicitly support the goals of maintenance and social critique. It is quite possible to be relevant to something without ensuring its continuing and critical presence in students' repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), and its presence in our classrooms and communities. We believe that the term CRP and, just as important, the way it has been taken up in teacher education and practice needs to be revised forward from the crucial work it has done over the past two decades. We make this call with deep respect for the work we have cited to this point, for it has allowed us all to move beyond rationalizing the need to include the linguistic, literate, and other cultural practices (e.g., Hip Hop) of our communities meaningfully as assets in educational spaces. Rather, we begin with this as a given and ask, *for what purposes and with what outcomes*?

As such, CSP explicitly calls for schooling to be a site for sustaining the cultural ways of being of communities of color. We believe that the term, stance, and practice of CSP are increasingly necessary in the context of the new students of color majority in U.S. public schools: 2014 was the first year students of color were the majority in U.S. public schools, whereas in 1970, 80% of students were White (Strauss, 2014).[7] Indeed, given these extraordinary demographic shifts in and far beyond schools (Taylor, 2014), promoting linguistic and cultural dexterity is no longer only about equally valuing all of our communities—it is also about the skills, knowledges, and ways of being needed for success in the present and future. As our society continues to shift, CSP must be part of a shifting *culture of power* (Delpit,

1988). We cannot continue to act as if the White middle-class linguistic, literate, and cultural skills and ways of being that were seen as the sole gatekeepers to the opportunity structure over a quarter-century ago have remained so or will remain so as our society changes. Simply put, the future is a multilingual and multiethnic one, regardless of attempts to suppress that reality. For too long we have taught our youth (and our teachers) that Dominant American English (DAE) and other White middle-class normed practices and ways of being alone are the key to power, while denying the languages and other cultural practices that students of color bring to the classroom. Ironically, this outdated philosophy will not grant our young people access to power; rather, it may increasingly deny them that access.

Yet, despite these contemporary shifts, a vocal number of researchers, whose work is deeply flawed theoretically and methodologically, continue to argue that youth of color suffer from "a language gap" (see Avineri & Johnson, 2015, for a resounding critique of this research). This research not only upholds what Alim (2004) and Alim and Smitherman (2012) have referred to as *linguistic supremacy*, but it is also sadly out of step with our new demographic reality. CSP, then, is necessary to honor, value, and center the rich and varied practices of communities of color, *and* is a necessary pedagogy for helping shape access to power in a changing nation.

As evidenced by the "language gap" research, the demographic and cultural changes sweeping the United States and other nations present an opportunity and an imperative, but they are no guarantee of educational and social equity in the short term. Indeed, many indices of equality are going in the opposite direction, as a backlash against the reality of our racially and culturally shifting future is in full effect. Evidence of this backlash includes explicit assimilationist monolingual/monocultural educational policies (for example, Arizona HB2281, ["standard"] English Only laws in several states, the prevalence of decontextualized, monolingual literacy programs for students of color, and wildly disproportional discipline, push-out (not "dropout"), and incarceration rates for students of color).[8] And these educational policies, of course, are embedded in the larger context of continued institutional and environmental racism, including police brutality and mass incarceration, unsafe water, and the disposability of Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies and, more generally, the nation's poor (Hill, 2016).[9]

In this context, the goals of CSP are even more urgent, especially when coupled with the emergence of recent research from Arizona (Cabrera et al., 2014) and California (Dee & Penner, 2016) that shows that students of color have more success across subjects in school (even on dominant, narrow measures) when given the opportunity to enroll in ethnic studies courses that center their experiences. In Chapter 6 of this volume, Timothy San Pedro shares a powerful narrative of James, a Native student (Ute and Pima tribes) who recommitted to driving across the border between his reservation and the city to attend high school because he was motivated by a new class being

offered on Native American literature, the first of its type at his school. After deciding to drop out of school, news of this class was, according to James, "the only reason" he came to school:

> just the fact that I'm Native. Just the fact that we're talking about things [in the Native American literature classroom] that I'm familiar with, ya know? Kinda like the ceremony and stuff. The different tribes and stuff and that's where I feel comfortable, you know? I think it's better that we learn about Native American stuff other than the stuff like in my history classes. Whatever they learn about: Columbus or whatever. That stuff don't interest me, ya know? This stuff—*this stuff*—interests me.

In this case, James's narrative, by decentering "Columbus or whatever" and centering Native cultures, practices, languages, literatures, and histories in a critical framework, speaks quite literally to CSP as an anti-settler-colonial, anti-imperial project. Given the results of the emerging research on the value of ethnic studies, and the myriad examples of educational narratives like James's, any future attempts to ban race and ethnic studies or to pass English-Only laws must be seen as part and parcel of the political project of whiteness—that is, as oppressive, restrictive policies that are passed with the express intent of limiting the progress of communities of color.[10]

SUSTAINING DYNAMIC COMMUNITY PRACTICES

Our second loving critique examines how contemporary research and practice too often draw over-deterministic links between languages, literacies, cultural practices, and race/ethnicity. As we seek to perpetuate and foster a pluralist present and future through our pedagogies, it is crucial that we understand that the ways in which young people are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and their engagement with culture is always shifting and dynamic. Indeed, the vast majority of asset-oriented research, and the pedagogies it documents or enacts, has been focused solely on abstract or fixed versions of the culturally situated practices of our communities.

Although these practices (e.g., Indigenous languages and cultural ways of knowing, African American language and cultural ways of knowing) have historically been and continue to be the target of deficit approaches, contemporary linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural research has pushed against the tendency of researchers and practitioners to assume static relationships between race, ethnicity, language, and cultural ways of being (Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Irizarry, 2007;

Paris, 2011; Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2014). Such assumptions have led to the unfortunate simplification of asset pedagogies as solely about considering longstanding practices while simultaneously ignoring the shifting and changing practices of students and their communities. The result has been the simplification of what teachers are seeking to sustain as only, for example, African American Language (AAL) among Black students or Spanish among Latinx students (a one-to-one mapping of race and language). And this goes, of course, beyond language, where communities of cultural practice, such as Hip Hop cultures, are assumed to be a cultural source for teaching with only Black or even with Black and Brown students.

To move us out of this overly deterministic rut while continuing (of course) to attend to sustaining the cultural practices that have sustained and strengthened us, CSP shifts toward contemporary understandings of culture as dynamic and fluid, while also allowing for the past and present to be seen as merging, a continuum, or distinct, depending on how young people and their communities live race/ethnicity, language, and culture. In Chapter 12 of this volume, for example, Holmes and Gonzalez argue for the need to focus on "elder epistemologies" and practices as they have sustained Indigenous communities for centuries. In fact, as Carol Lee (Chapter 15, this volume) argues, in the contexts of genocide, land theft, and slavery—the foundational, settler colonial experiences of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans—acts of historic and cultural resistance and *survivance* (Vizenor, 1994) allowed Indigenous and African-descended communities to sustain practices and belief systems (and their very lives) in the face of racialized White terror. As a collective, we argue that these cultural practices and ways of knowing should certainly be sustained, even as we make room for how youth of today are reworking this set of knowledges to meet their current cultural and political realities.

As examples of these cultural reworkings, we draw from our research (Alim, 2011; Paris, 2011) in local and international contexts. In this work, we examine how young people both rehearse longstanding versions of racial/ethnic and linguistic identities and, importantly, offer new ones (Alim & Reyes, 2011; Irizarry, 2007; Martinez, 2017; Paris, 2009, 2011). In his research, Django worked with youth in a California high school and community to explore the important ways Black students navigated identities through the longstanding practices of AAL and Hip Hop cultures. What he discovered was that in addition to Black youth, many Mexicana/o, Mexican American, and Pacific Islander youth (U.S.-born and born in Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga) also navigated identities through their participation in AAL and Hip Hop cultural practices. Moreover, they did so while simultaneously participating in their longstanding community practices of, for example, Spanishes or Samoan and other cultural practices (clothing, ways of believing) passed down from the elders in their ethnic communities.

In this way, much like the global youth practices documented in Alim's studies of global linguistic flows (2009) and global ill-literacies (2011), youth were fashioning new linguistically and culturally dexterous ways of being Latinx or Fijian that relied on longstanding cultural practices while they also relied on emerging ones. Therefore, our pedagogies must address the well-understood fact that what it means to be Black or Latinx or Pacific Islander (as examples) both remains rooted *and* continues to shift in the ways culture always has.

While conceptions of time, heritage, and the stakes for sustaining particular practices vary across contexts for communities (see Holmes and Gonzalez, Chapter 12 of this volume), these examples show that while it is crucial that we work to sustain Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous languages and cultures in our pedagogies, we must be open to sustaining them in ways that attend to the emerging, intersectional, and dynamic ways in which they are lived and used by young people. Indeed, applications of the most lasting frameworks for asset pedagogies—the *funds of knowledge* (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994), the *third space* (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez, Baquedando-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chiu 1999), and *culturally relevant pedagogy*—have too often been enacted by teachers and researchers in static ways that look only to the important ways that racial/ethnic difference was enacted by previous generations. As youth continue to develop new, complex, and intersecting forms of racial/ethnic identification in a world where cultural and linguistic recombinations flow with purpose, we need pedagogies that speak to our shifting cultural realities or, as Pennycook (2007) put it, pedagogies that "go with the flow."

A final caveat in our discussion of culture and pedagogy: Too often cultural practices, activities, and ways of being and doing are invoked in ways that obscure the racialized, gendered, classed, dis/abilitied, languaged (and so on) bodies of the people enacting them. In short, we cannot separate culture from the bodies enacting culture and the ways those bodies are subjected to systemic discrimination. CSP, then, is about sustaining cultures as connected to sustaining the bodies—the lives—of the people who cherish and practice them. Further, as argued by Waitoller and King Thorius (2016), focusing on the body allows us to view overlapping and intersecting oppressions as opportunities for those of us committed to CSP to form strategic alliances against exclusion.

FURTHER INWARD: CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY

In our final loving critique, we seek to move beyond critiquing the dominant pedagogies that perpetuate educational injustice, and turn our gaze inward on our own communities and cultural practices as people and scholars of

color. Here, we are primarily interested in creating generative spaces for asset pedagogies to support the practices of youth and communities of color, while maintaining a critical lens vis-à-vis these practices. Providing the example of Hip Hop as a form of the cultural and community practice that pedagogies should sustain, we argue that rather than avoiding problematic practices or keeping them hidden beyond the White gaze, CSP must work with students to critique regressive practices (e.g., homophobia, misogyny) and raise critical consciousness. We as authors are implicated in this final critique, as we have been throughout this work; our own research on and practice of Hip Hop pedagogies have not always taken up these problematic elements in the direct ways that we forward here.

And so we migrate further inward, to what Alim has called "ill-literacies" (Alim, 2011)—counterhegemonic forms of youth literacies—and ask, "What happens when ill-literacies get *ill*?" In other words, what happens when rather than challenging hegemonic ideas and outcomes, the cultural practices of youth actually reproduce them, or even create new ones? Most of the research and practice under the asset pedagogies umbrella, including the frameworks of the *funds of knowledge,* the *third space*, and *culturally relevant pedagogy,* too often view youth cultures through a purely "positive" or "progressive" lens. This is true as well for the research and pedagogical traditions founded upon these frameworks, like the hugely influential Hip Hop pedagogies movement.

The vast majority of Hip Hop education research has focused pedagogies on the many progressive, justice-oriented aspects of Hip Hop. There are good reasons for this. For one, there is of course much in Hip Hop's past and present that is explicitly concerned with social justice. Also, most advocates of Hip Hop pedagogies are consciously engaging in a project that views deficit thinking as a product of White supremacy and the racism (and classism, cisheteronormativity, xenophobia, etc.) that it engenders. As we have stated, however, we build on this important work by engaging in reflexive analyses that are not bound by how educational systems that privilege White middle-class norms view the practices of communities of color.

In nearly all of the U.S.-based research on Hip Hop pedagogies, and all of the globally produced research in this area, youth's spoken, rhymed, and written texts are seen only as challenging prescriptive, restrictive, and antidemocratic notions of culture, citizenship, language, literacy, and education. With a few important exceptions (Hill, 2009; Low, 2011; Love, 2012; and some chapters in Petchauer & Hill, 2013), studies rarely look critically at the ways in which youth might reify existing hegemonic discourses about, as examples, gender, race, sexuality, and citizenship. In other words, Hip Hop pedagogies have tended to be largely celebratory and have ignored the contradictory forces found within all popular cultural forms (Giroux, 1996). However, the simultaneously progressive and oppressive currents in these innovative youth practices must be interrogated and critiqued, as has been

done consistently for noneducation-based Hip Hop research, such as Rose (1994), Perry (2004), Neal (2006), Haupt (2008), Williams (2017) and Alim et al. (2010, 2011). Simply put, a reading of most of the asset-based pedagogies literature would make it appear that youth practices present us with no internal inconsistencies. Being participants and scholars of and with communities of color, we take it as a given that practices of youth of color often work explicitly toward social justice, but critically, we must pay attention to both the liberatory and nonliberatory currents within these practices.

Many Hip Hop pedagogies, from Alim's critical Hip Hop language pedagogies (2004) to Emdin's work on Hip Hop and science education (2010), for example, argue for the use of rap battles—improvised verbal duels—in classroom learning. Yet few take up the fact that the Hip Hop battle can sometimes be a masculinist space that excludes young women, queer youth, and young men of color who do not identify as Black (even as young women, queer youth, and youth who are not Black continue to "roc the mic"). CSP must contend with the possibility that Hip Hop pedagogies that utilize rap battles (as one among many examples of Hip Hop pedagogical practices) may seemingly serve the needs of many students of color, particularly young, able-bodied, cishetero men, but may unwittingly reproduce forms of exclusion in our classrooms and communities. (For example, the field rarely produces gendered analyses of classroom participation when using Hip Hop.)

The revoicing of ableist, racist, (trans)misogynistic, homophobic, patriarchal, and xenophobic discourses does occur in some forms of commercial rap (and in some rap produced by youth in our communities). We must work toward CSPs that sustain the many practices and knowledges of communities of color that forward equity (like much of Hip Hop does) and help youth, teachers, and researchers expose those practices that must be revised in the project of cultural justice. Our goal is to find ways to support and sustain what we know are remarkable ways with language, literacy, and cultural practice, while at the same time opening up spaces for students themselves to critique the ways that they might be—intentionally or not—reproducing discourses that marginalize members of our communities. As Low (2011) has argued, the very real and difficult tensions found within youth cultures are not reasons to inhibit their use in schools, but rather to demand their use in the development of more critical approaches.

Although we have used Hip Hop education here as an example, it is important to note again that these damaging discourses are present across *all* cultural communities and practices, including those within which we and our young people are socialized. As Tricia Rose recently argued in her June 2016 keynote address at Cambridge University's Hip Hop Studies Conference, in line with our notion of loving critique, "to love something is not to affirm it all the time; we need transformational love." Ultimately, sustaining those practices within our communities that promote equity across race,

gender, sexuality, language, class, and ability and revising those that don't will help us thrive and, ultimately, will allow us to get free (Smith, 2016).

REFLECTING FORWARD: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE NEED TO GO

CSP must extend the previous visions of asset pedagogies by demanding explicitly pluralist outcomes that are not centered on White middle-class, monolingual/monocultural norms and notions of educational achievement—and that call out the imposition of these norms as harmful to and discriminatory against many of our communities. CSP must also resist static, unidirectional notions of culture and race that center only on longstanding cultural practices of communities without also attending to continual shifts and cultural reworkings. Finally, CSP must be willing to seriously contend with the sometimes problematic aspects of our communities, even as we celebrate our progressive, social justice-oriented movements and approaches.

We are in many ways at the asset-based, critical pedagogical edge. For us, as we hope is clear by now, we are not interested in offering pedagogical quick fixes or "best practices" that teachers can drop into the same old tired curriculum that deadens the souls of vast numbers of children of color in U.S. schools. Nor are we, as we wrote earlier in this chapter, interested in asking questions that fall neatly within the bounds of conventional educational research and practice.

As such, this volume is a product of a collective of researchers and teachers who share the explicit purpose of thinking through the implications of CSP, pushing its theoretical boundaries, growing its practice through case study and critique, and bringing theory and practice together to offer a way forward toward reaching our goal of developing a more pluralistic and just future. As part of this collective effort, we organized a retreat in Half Moon Bay, California, in order to flesh out and think through the challenges and potential of CSP in times of radically changing demographics, ongoing justice movements, and severe political and social backlash. Out of that retreat we took on the name "Half Moon Bay Crew," connoting the love and respect we developed prior to, during, and since our intensive retreat.

In reflecting forward on the present and future of CSP, we think it's necessary to once again ask the question: What are we seeking to sustain through CSP? The simple, perhaps taken-for-granted assumption behind the development of CSP is: We sustain what we love (to remix Ladson-Billings's oft-heard assertion, "we teach what we love"). CSP calls for sustaining and revitalizing that which has over the centuries sustained *us* (Chapters 3, 4, and 15, this volume) as communities of color struggling to "make it"—to resist, revitalize, and reimagine—under enduring colonial conditions that

constantly work to diminish our intellectual capacities, cultures, languages, and, yes, our very lives. As we mention love and lives here, we hold up the work of Black queer and trans women and all who have forwarded #BlackLivesMatter (Garza, 2014). This movement for Black lives and distinct, coalitional, intersectional justice work in Native (most especially in this moment, the Indigenous sovereignty, land, and Water Protectors at Standing Rock[11]), Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ communities, in many ways led by young people, is calling out systemic racism across institutions, including schools. And it has transformed our thinking about the need for CSP as being literally about sustaining our minds and bodies as communities of color within a schooling system that has often had the exact opposite goals.

At the end of the day, the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* is only as important as the ideas behind it and the enactments it engenders. Our collective knows well that naming matters, that terms like *culturally relevant pedagogy*, *cultural modeling*, *third space*, and *funds of knowledge* remain lasting concepts (after all, folks in this volume coined these terms and concepts!). But as Kris Gutiérrez (Chapter 14, this volume) has said in our meetings, we also know that "bad things happen to good ideas." Yet it is the decades of educational justice work done through these terms, these concepts, that matters most. And we are hopeful that CSP can join in such justice work at a time when we must be ever more explicit about critiquing the oppressive systems that limit our life experiences and centering our cultural communities in teaching and learning.

We believe that a critical centering of the valued ways of youth and communities of color in education is a radical act, an act made possible by the work of many in our collective and across the centuries of struggle in our communities, an act that disrupts a schooling system centered on ideologies of White, middle-class, monolingual, cisheteropatriarchal, able-bodied superiority. In this book, we focus on and examine educational spaces that instead center cultural, linguistic, and literate pluralism as part of schooling for racial justice and positive social transformation. We believe that CSP, like all critical asset-based approaches, is at heart about survival—a survival we want to sustain through education—and about changing the conditions under which we live and work by opening up new and revitalizing community rooted ways of thinking about education beyond, as Morrison reminded us, "the White gaze." We want to create conditions where children of color can both survive and thrive. Toward this effort, we agree wholeheartedly with Carol Lee, who shares in her chapter in this volume:

> [I]f particular cultural practices and belief systems allowed people of African descent in the U.S. and the diaspora to survive and thrive through enslavement and Jim Crow—America's two centuries of legal apartheid—then it seems reasonable that sustaining these practices and

strategic transformations in response to changing conditions is a worthwhile goal.

The gravity of this statement, and this work writ large, is laid to bear starkly and beautifully by Lee, and provokes further critical questions: Under the latest iterations of White Supremacist, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchal ideologies, systems, and practices, what knowledges must we sustain in order to overcome and survive when faced with a power that seeks to sustain itself above and beyond—and sometimes shot through—our bodies? CSP is indeed about providing our children with the opportunities to survive and thrive, but it is also centrally about love, a love that can help us see our young people as whole versus broken when they enter schools, and a love that can work to keep them whole as they grow and expand who they are and can be through education.

CSP: A CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL PROJECT

Like the asset pedagogies from which it builds, CSP is both a conceptual and an empirical project. We seek to offer visions of teaching and learning and evidence of teaching and learning at once. Across the long-term, community-engaged studies in this volume, community accountability and local affordances and constraints mean that CSP takes on necessarily different forms across different contexts. Even within this necessary and expected variation, key features across the chapters include a critical centering on dynamic community languages, valued practices and knowledges, student and community agency and input, historicized content and instruction, a capacity to contend with internalized oppressions, and an ability to curricularize all of this in learning settings.

Some of the chapters in this volume, all anchored to long-term engagements with communities and learning settings, are empirical/conceptual (practice leads theorizing), and others are conceptual/empirical (theorizing leads practice). This split is not dichotomous, as we understand forging practice and theory as concurrent, reciprocal, and iterative processes. As such, we organize the volume into two sections that, together, map out where we are and where we need to go in our collective work with CSP. Part I, "Enacting Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Students, Teachers, and Schools," offers several theoretically driven empirical cases of robust CSPs centered on critical engagements with languages, literacies, literatures, performances, and knowledges in classrooms and schools. By showing how CSP works across settings, these chapters extend the theory through situated practice. In Part II, "Envisioning CSP Forward Through Theories of Practice," we offer practice-anchored theoretical contributions that push on and strengthen current conceptions of CSP to chart our

present and future. Together, the two sections offer the dialogic interweaving of research, theory, and practice necessary to fully understand and move forward with CSP for educational and cultural justice with students and communities in a changing world.

As we continue to think through the promises and challenges of culturally sustaining pedagogy, we are hopeful that our work in this volume can join young people, educators, communities, and scholars in our collective struggle against an educational system that contains us and toward one that sustains us.

NOTES

1. White middle-class norms of language, literacy, and cultural ways of interacting demanded for access and achievement in school have been documented and contrasted with the norms of working-class communities of color (and, less so, working-class White communities) across four decades of scholarship. Regarding White norms of "standard" or Dominant American English language use, see, for example, Labov (1972), Smitherman (1977), Garcia (1993), and Alim (2004). Regarding White middle-class literacy norms, see, for example, Heath (1983) and Kirkland (2013). Regarding White-centered cultural norms of interacting (including language), see Valdés (1996), Romero (1994), Lee (2005), and Leonardo (2009).

2. Tuck & Yang (2014) refer to this as the *colonial settler gaze*, which includes attention to race and racism but also explicitly indexes land theft and genocide against Indigenous peoples as foundational U.S. nation-state projects.

3. While we largely focus our argument here and in this volume more generally on race and racism within a nation-state context founded on ideologies of White supremacy, we recognize intersecting forms of oppression and resistance, including gender, sexuality, dis/ability, spirituality, and class, among others. See Waitoller & King Thorius (2016) for a particularly cogent discussion of CSP at the intersection of race and dis/ability.

4. Though it is easy to single out "White people," as they more often occupy positions of power in the United States and beyond, what we mean here, really, is *anybody* who resinscribes White Supremacist ideologies. As Pulitzer Prize–winning author Junot Diaz noted in a 2012 address at Stanford University, "White people act like we need them for everything. The truth is: We don't even need you for the maintenance of White Supremacy!" In other words, he was less hopeful that White Supremacy would be dismantled by focusing on the efforts of White people alone (though surely much focus is needed there). Rather, he urged People of Color to look inward critically to discover powerful ways to disrupt oppressive systems, to liberate

ourselves from the panoptic White gaze. See *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination,* edited by Monica Hanna, Jennifer Harford Vargas, and José David Saldívar (Duke, 2016), for more on these ideas.

5. *Lau v. Nichols* was brought and won on behalf of Chinese-speaking Chinese American students in San Francisco who claimed a lack of equal educational opportunity based on language discrimination. The Supreme Court's 1974 decision for the plaintiffs relied on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which explicitly banned educational discrimination based on race or national origin. *MLK Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District*, more commonly known as the 1979 "Black English Case," was brought and won by families of 11 Black students in Ann Arbor, MI, who had been diagnosed as "linguistically handicapped" by the district's speech pathologist. The families contended that the children had been misdiagnosed and miseducated as a result of their strong use of AAL (see Smitherman, 1981).

6. Other important terms and formulations that have looked to forge asset pedagogies with students of color include, but are not limited to, *culturally responsive pedagogy* (Gay, 2000), *culturally congruent pedagogy* (Au & Kawakami, 1994), *culturally compatible pedagogy* (Jacob & Jordan, 1987), *engaged pedagogy* (hooks, 1994), and *critical care praxis* (Rolón-Dow, 2005). We focus on the term and formulation of *culturally relevant pedagogies* because it has become the most used shorthand term and concept in teacher education, teacher practice, and research on teaching and learning.

7. In citing this demographic shift, it is crucial, of course, to note that Indigenous communities have been living and learning, have been educating their children and young people for millennia on their lands, though U.S. public schooling for Native peoples has historically been one of the institutions responsible for the forced and violent loss of culture and land associated with the settler colonial nation-state (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

8. See the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data for examples of this massive disproportionality.

9. Given the campaign and outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, this backlash and context of continued racism will continue unabated, and by all indications will increase, though it is important to note that the larger context of settler colonialism and White supremacy supersedes electoral outcomes (as seen in the Black Lives Matter and Standing Rock movements beginning under Democratic leadership.)

10. At the time of writing, California had recently passed a state bill to develop a model ethnic studies curriculum for voluntary adoption by any public school, and several large urban districts, like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego, had recently implemented ethnic studies courses for

all secondary students. These developments are evidence of successes in a long and continuing struggle in research and practice to center students and communities of color meaningfully in school teaching and learning.

11. For more on the Standing Rock movement, including the role of schooling, see Hayes, 2016, and Schwartz & Prakash, 2016.

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