

**Nurturing Critical Dialogic Partnerships:
A Praxis for Teacher Induction with/in Urban School Communities**

BY

WILLIAM KENNEDY

B.A., College of the Holy Cross, 1994

M.Ed., City College of New York, 2002

DISSERTATION

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Defense Committee:

Rebecca Woodard, Chair and Advisor
Bill Ayers, Curriculum and Instruction
David Stovall, Educational Policy Studies
Victoria Trinder, Curriculum and Instruction
Wayne Au, University of Washington - Bothell

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SUMMARY

This research explores the Critical Dialogue that I facilitated and engaged in as part of a dialogic Praxis cycle with four first year teachers in Chicago Public Schools, all graduates of the critical and urban-focused teacher education program where I am an instructor. Using a Freirean conception of dialogue, I engaged in third space Critical Dialogue Partnerships with each teacher, five times over the course of the school year. Our dialogues focused specifically on the critical analysis of their attempts to engage in classroom instruction from the ‘curricular standpoint’ (Au, 2012) of the low income students of color in their middle school classrooms as well as their attempts to develop a dialogic Critical Care with the various members of their school community - students, fellow teachers, administrators, parents and families, and community members.

Through this critical dialogue process, explicit attention was given to how the teacher participants confronted hegemonic socialization, in its various forms, as teachers in urban schools situated within the context of US Schooling. Using Practitioner Inquiry, I examined our transcribed dialogues to consider the ways that new teachers described their struggles and successes engaging in critical dialogue with the members of their school community. Together, we found that critical dialogue was easier when there was support amongst other school community members or structures that facilitated dialogue within the institution of the urban school. Conversely, in school communities where dialogue was actively silenced or dismissed, the teacher participants struggled to enact the approaches to teaching they believed in and had been educated to enact.

The teacher participants and I also reflected on the process of our Critical Dialogue Partnerships, a Praxis for Teacher Induction, and considered the reciprocal learning generated toward future classroom practice and future teacher education curriculum. Of particular significance was the impact of first year teachers partnering with a teacher educator who had shared knowledge and experience with the teachers, and had an established trusting relationship.

This approach has potential to reconceptualize teacher education and induction by modeling a critical and dialogic praxis that bridges teacher education and induction, and supplements and enriches the in-classroom technical and procedural aspects of induction support for novice classroom teachers in urban schools. Drawing from this research, I articulate a specific Praxis cycle for engaging new teachers in critical dialogue that centers their teaching practice, deepens critical consciousness, and resists hegemonic socialization in urban schools.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I moved to Chicago after 11 years as a middle school teacher in New York City Public Schools, my first job was as an Induction Coach supporting brand-new-to-teaching teachers in Chicago Public Schools. This was the first time I learned that “Induction Coach” was an actual job in schools. As a new teacher, I hadn’t been assigned one, and in the decade I spent in New York City schools, the only induction I’d ever heard of was a veteran teacher volunteering to be (or being *voluntold* to be) a down-the-hallway ‘buddy’.

But the organization¹ that hired me had an established set of induction practices based on a body of research literature on induction coaching - sometimes referred to as ‘mentoring’ – a field that had been growing since the 1980s (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). As part of my induction training, the statistic I heard repeatedly was that US teachers quit at alarming rates, with nearly 50% of the teaching force leaving the profession within 5 years, and at even higher rates in urban schools (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001). This statistic resonated with me. After teaching in an urban school community, inside a giant urban system, I had seen the ways that stability and institutional memory helped build collaborative learning communities, and how teacher turnover could mean having to start from square one every year.

There were a number of beliefs that I held about teaching that I found in the induction pedagogy of the new organization, including the practice of reflective dialogue between a mentor and mentee and the recognition that teaching is complex and requires ongoing learning. There was some attention to the need for new teachers to enact a culturally relevant pedagogy, but overall, the approach to mentoring was focused more on improving the technical ‘practices’ of new teachers and less on helping teachers enact a critical, justice-oriented approach to teaching. The pedagogy did not explicitly involve attending to

¹ The New Teacher Center is a national non-profit that began at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1988. The initial research used to support their induction model of mentoring was, in part, culled from California’s statewide induction system (BTSA-Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment), where experienced teachers step out of the classroom for two years and become induction coaches. This statewide model seemed to me to be a thoughtful mid-career opportunity that might reinvigorate teachers who were ready to reflect and teach what they knew to novices, while still protecting the labor rights of workers and continuing to grow the profession – teachers kept their salaries, pension, and position at their schools, and then returned to the classroom when the two years of induction work ended (Olebe, 2002).

critical analysis, the significance of context and history, the lived experience of the various members of a school community, and the importance of critical self-examination and social location.

Early Conceptions of Critical Dialogue in my Classroom Teaching

This marginalization of criticality clashed with my previous experience in schools. Most of my 11 years of classroom teaching² were at a public middle school called Crossroads, which was part of a small network of NYC public schools that used democratic, progressive approaches to teaching and to school design. The school at the center of that network³ was Central Park East (CPE), founded by Debbie Meier. In the 30 years since it was founded, CPE had become a model for urban democratic progressive schooling, built on the premise that collaboration and trust between teachers, school leaders, students, and parents leads to successful education. (Bryk & Schneider, 2003)

At Crossroads we used dialogue as a form of communication, but also as a pedagogy for interaction between all members of the school community – teachers and staff, students, parents and families. Our staff meetings were democratically run and non-hierarchical. We rotated facilitation and made decisions by consensus with all school staff having an equal voice. Together, we critically examined and created school policies. We also read, discussed, and applied a variety of critical texts including Paolo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Dialogue was at the core of our engagement with parents and families around societal educational issues. This dialogue resulted in us planning and enacting a protest of the killing of Amadou Diallo⁴ as well as organizing a boycott of the first wave of amped-up standardized tests in the late 1990s. When the Twin Towers were attacked on 9/11 and the Bush Administration beat the drums of war, we spent the

² My first year of teaching was at Crossroads through a fellowship named "Teachers for Tomorrow" sponsored and organized by the Center for Collaborative Education. My second and third years were at IS 306, a large public middle school in the Morris Heights neighborhood of the Bronx. I then returned to Crossroads for the remaining 8 years of classroom teaching.

³ This network of public schools like Central Park East, and my school, Crossroads, were part of a partnership in NYC between districts, teachers and community members to create small schools that prioritized teacher-led professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Elmore, R., & Burney, D., 1997). This network of dozens of small progressive schools run by teachers with and in poor communities of color in a large urban district weren't charter schools, but small, democratic, sometimes non-hierarchical schools using progressive and critical pedagogy.

⁴ On February 4, 1999, Amadou Diallo, a 23-year-old immigrant from Guinea, was shot and killed by four New York City Police Department plain-clothed officers. The officers fired a combined total of 42 shots, 19 of which struck Diallo. Diallo was unarmed at the time, entering his own apartment.

year looking at our nation's relationship with war and the role of media in promoting and questioning it. In my classroom, I supported students to ask critical questions about their world, develop tools to pursue answers to those questions, and dialogue about possible solutions that they could enact as kids in New York City.

Crossroads helped me to conceptualize what it meant to be a critical, dialogic, caring teacher for social justice. I was taught to reflect on my teaching as a member of a learning community of practice, and I was invited to reflect on the practice of others in a public and safe way. I did not have an induction coach, but I was *mentored* in a community of caring practitioners

Early Conceptions of Critical Dialogue in my Induction Mentorship

I wanted to try and share this vision of critical and dialogic teaching with the new teachers in CPS that I was assigned to mentor in Chicago. The new teachers needed support for the technical aspects of teaching (e.g. efficient lesson planning, routines, procedures, etc.), but I also wanted to engage them in a critical, dialogic, caring mentorship process, with hopes of then inspiring teachers to engage in that same caring, critical, dialogic approach with their students, families and staff members.

This meant that our mentorship often began with trying to solve the present problems - the ones right in front of us - collaboratively. When that was done to mutual satisfaction, I would try to have us step back and critically analyze that problem. Where did it come from and why? What larger factors influenced that smaller set of events? What was needed to make it right for everyone involved? What lessons can be learned from it? How can we explain what we've figured out here to everyone else? How can we do better?

As we worked together, it started to become clear that though many of the teachers I was mentoring had had some teacher education, they had not necessarily articulated to themselves where their pedagogy was rooted, or how their decision-making was connected to some sort of larger framework or philosophy. Many of the new teachers expressed a belief in equity and teaching for social justice, but when the structures in their classroom began to break down, and their work became stressful, those

conceptions often collapsed, and were replaced by moves to impose order and control, which seemed to limit critical analysis and silencing dialogue.

In those moments, I would try to push them to reflect on the justice-oriented approaches they came in with, and notice how they were shifting to approaches that were harmful, oppressive, and deficit-oriented toward their students, the parents and families, and the other members of their school community. But without the foundation of a critical common language or traditions of practices, we had a hard time naming and addressing the shift that was happening.

Early Conceptions of Deepening and Extending Critical Dialogue in Teacher Education

An opportunity arose to develop an induction program directly connected to a teacher education program at the University of Chicago. This program design made sense to me because it explicitly connected teacher education and theory to teacher induction and practice as part of a continuing trajectory of teacher development. UTEP focused specifically on the ‘urban’ context, recognizing that learning to teach in schools serving marginalized communities of color requires an intentionally culturally relevant curriculum and immersive experiences in urban schools and communities. In the face of programs like Teach For America, whose preparation before teaching lasted 6 weeks, UTEP instead expanded preservice at the postgraduate level to two years as well as three years of Induction coaching.

My new position gave me opportunities to work with both graduates in their first classrooms and with teacher candidates in their preservice courses. As an instructor, I co-constructed and collaboratively taught courses that mixed together my classroom experience in critical urban schools with my new critical doctoral work and what I knew about the needs of new teachers in Chicago Public Schools. I assumed, at the time, that distributing a curriculum over two years would be enough to not only prepare teachers to become the critically conscious justice oriented urban teachers, but keep them on a sustained path of improvement through critical reflection.

A unique aspect of my tenure at UTEP is that I have observed and worked with multiple cohorts from admission through advanced years in their teaching careers. In that time, I’ve seen graduates adopt curricular and classroom management practices that more closely resemble the status quo than those

consistent with the critical tradition explored throughout their teacher education. As teachers in the system, some adopted deficit-oriented stances towards their students as well as the communities in which they work. Sometimes this would manifest in an abuse of power, other times it would manifest in abandonment of responsibility. And yet, as students and teacher candidates, these same teachers had demonstrated a commitment to critical practice. This shift in UTEP teachers was puzzling to me. Why were teachers seemingly veering off course?

I wondered if teacher candidates were leaving the program with theoretical understandings of the importance of dialogic pedagogy and relationship building with urban communities, but lacked enough experience trying to enact it in practice. In my doctoral studies, my exposure to Critical theory and Critical Race Theory in Education and teacher education reconnected me to the conceptions of critical dialogue from my time in a community of practitioners at Crossroads. I began experimenting in my UTEP classes with more explicitly creating experiences that promoted the practice of dialogue and centering an understanding of the funds of knowledge of urban communities.

Inspired by my learning about the pedagogy of the Inter Project and the Popular Schools established by Paulo Freire and the PT party in Sao Paulo from 1989-1991 (O’Cadiz, et al, 1998), I re-designed two courses – one theory-oriented and one experiential, practice-oriented for my teacher candidates in their first year of UTEP. I wondered what did teacher candidates need in order to enact their own Chicago version of the Inter Project, which sought to “establish a dialectic relationship between the common sense notions of the community and the universe of systematized knowledge” (O’Cadiz, et al, p.108).

In my Philosophy of Education course, teacher candidates studied critical theory and explicitly experimented with using dialogue as a liberatory pedagogy. We used Culture Circles (Freire, 1973) and dialogue journals as core practices that could be applied in their own classrooms with kids. Simultaneously, I revised our year-long Guided Fieldwork course to be centered on a practice I called

“Stakeholder Dialogues.”⁵ In this course, I partnered with a handful of neighborhood schools in various communities across CPS, and placed my teacher candidate students in dialogue groups with the various members of the school community - students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and non-teaching staff.

It is interesting to note that none of the partnering neighborhood schools nor my students had engaged in a dialogue like this before. In the evaluations of the experience, the majority of participants expressed that these conversations were enriching and valuable. From this experience, I hoped my students would see the power of dialogue with *all members* of a school community, and come away with some practical strategies for engaging different members of a school community in.

Critical Dialogue Partnerships - The Project Overview

As I considered what was worth studying for my dissertation project, I was curious about how the increased work with UTEP students around critical and dialogic pedagogy would play out once they were in their classrooms. Would they enact curriculum design that drew on the funds of knowledge of their students and communities? Would they initiate and nurture dialogue with the various members of their urban school communities? How would they handle it when the going got tough?

I decided to inquire into these questions from the standpoint of a practitioner-researcher, locating myself as both a teacher educator and induction coach with/in the research. I wondered if a critical dialogue process that was consistent with what we’d begun in the program could provide a blueprint for an Induction praxis that supported teachers’ critical practice. It was my assumption that the generative aspects of a dialogic pedagogy would deepen my own learning and practice as well as the teacher participants’ while contributing to the broader field of Teacher Education and Induction.

I invited all members of the cohort of UTEP teacher candidates set to graduate from the program at the start of the Dissertation project. I then selected four for this study and worked with them through their first year of classroom teaching in Chicago Public Schools. Throughout this project, I served as their

⁵ The teacher participants in this study and the rest of their classmates were the first cohort to have this version of my course

UTEP-assigned Induction coach in their classrooms, which involved regular observations and debriefing. However, the dissertation research is focused exclusively on our Critical Dialogue Partnerships meetings, which took place every two months (for a total of five across the year) after school or on the weekend in a non-school space. Each Critical Dialogue meeting in the Partnerships generally lasted two hours, where the teacher participant and I engaged in a dialogue that intentionally used a critical lens to examine their first year teaching experience. The project sought to answer the following research questions, split into two broad categories:

(1) The Participant's Critical Dialogue with School Stakeholders

- What happens when four teachers from UChicago UTEP, a program that centers critical dialogue as part of their urban teacher education, enter their first classrooms and begin engaging in what they understand to be critical dialogue with school stakeholders and continue engaging in critical dialogue with me, their teacher educator?
- What are the various meanings of critical dialogue to these new teachers, and what does critical dialogue look like in practice?
- When, where, why, and with whom are they having critical dialogue?
- If it appears to only happen in certain spaces, what do they (and I) make of that?

(2) Critical Dialogue between a Participant and me, a Teacher Educator

- What happens when they engage in a critical dialogue with me, their teacher educator?
- How does that critical dialogue, according to each of them, affect their thinking about their work or change their practice?

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the relevant literature that I've drawn from in this study. It begins with an explanation of the conceptual framework of critical dialogue and an explanation of a few key terms that I use throughout the project. I then look at the critical literature on urban schools and communities. Next, I describe literature on the hegemonic socialization of teachers, followed by an

articulation of the ways that critical teacher educators and scholars have put forward pedagogies that counter the oppressive aspects of socialization and build on the liberatory aspects. Finally, I look at the ways that teacher induction has perpetuated the socialization process along with examples and opportunities for induction to further promote a more socially just, critically conscious process of teacher education in the field.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methods I used to carry out the year-long research project, following four teacher participants from the UChicago UTEP program where I am an instructor. The study has two simultaneous research paths--the first is an inquiry into the critical dialogue initiated and developed by the teacher participants with the stakeholders of their school communities. The second is an inquiry into the process of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships between the teacher participant and myself, the teacher educator. Each of these research paths uses a different research method that is expounded upon in the Chapter.

Chapter 4, 5, and 6 present the data and my analysis of the ways in which the teacher participants engaged in critical dialogue with the members of their school community. I present and analyze snippets or pieces of the twenty critical dialogues, foregrounding the words of the teacher participants and myself in dialogue. I have organized these chapters around three major themes that I saw emerge, as it relates to where and with whom the teacher participants engaged in critical dialogue.

Chapter 4 centers on the critical dialogue that took place between the teacher participants and their students “Inside the Classroom.” This chapter focuses in two major forms of critical dialogue in that space - the formal, planned instruction, which draws on various critical dialogic pedagogical approaches including Critical Pedagogy, Social Justice Education, and Curricular Standpoint. The other form of critical dialogue that I focus on between the teacher participants and their students “Inside the Classroom” is the dialogic Critical Care they enact with individual students and in their classroom communities that draws on Critical Race Theory and other critical conceptions of care (e.g. ‘authentic care’, ‘othermothering’).

Chapter 5, I look at the ways that the teacher participants were able to engage in critical dialogue with the professional adults “Inside the Schoolhouse.” First examining their attempts to engage the more experienced teachers in their school, I look at the ways that critical dialogue was either welcomed or contested, and the ways that the teacher participants made sense of those experiences. I then look at the ways that the teacher participants engaged their Principals and other Administrators, who often were playing a formal evaluative role. Particular attention is paid here to the role that the socialization of new teachers influenced their experience of engaging in critical dialogue.

In Chapter 6, I examine the ways that the teacher participants engaged in critical dialogue with parents and family members of their students, as well as their attempts to engage community members in order to build solidarity and learn more about the funds of knowledge that exist around their school community. The structures of urban schooling helped to facilitate occasional but insufficient opportunities for the teacher participants to initiate critical dialogue, and they relied on their more experienced colleagues for support in this area. When colleagues and administration were already in solidarity with the community, the teacher participants had an easier time engaging in critical dialogue with community members, but it remained a challenge for them.

My analysis in Chapter 7 is focused on the process of the critical dialogue meetings between me and the teacher participants, and what makes up what I am calling the Critical Dialogue Partnerships. I articulate the Praxis cycle that encompasses the process of those meetings, and then look closely at one specific example of how the Critical Dialogue Partnerships were generative for me as an instructor in UTEP.

I conclude this dissertation in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the considerations for both Teacher Education and Teacher Induction that have come as a result of this study as well as the limitations. I also give detailed consideration to one example of the reciprocal learning that took place as a result of this study – new learning for me, as a teacher educator, about the curriculum and pedagogy for the teacher education program where I am an instructor and the participants are graduates.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, I begin with an articulation of the conceptual framework of this dissertation, specifically unpacking the term ‘critical dialogue’ and the supporting terms that drove my research: Critical Dialogue Partnerships, Praxis, Critical Dialogic Stance, and Third Space. I then discuss the related literature, beginning with the literature related to a critical analysis of US Schooling. Because the context of this project is focused on schools in urban communities of color, part of my analysis of US schools focuses on the literature related to construction of the term ‘urban’ and schooling as it relates to people of color living in low-income communities. An articulation of the influence of hegemonic socialization of teachers is also considered in terms of the teacher participants’ attempts to engage in dialogue with the other members of their urban school community.

I then consider the literature of critical teacher education as a response to oppressive US schooling and the hegemonic socialization of teachers, specifically the preparation of teachers to enact ‘curricular standpoint’ (Au, 2012) in their teaching and critical care in their relationships and approaches to building classroom community. Both curricular standpoint and critical care are considered in terms of the ways that teachers engage in dialogue with their school colleagues and the urban community that surrounds their school. The final section looks at the literature of teacher induction and the ways it’s policy and pedagogy are situated within a critical tradition.

Conceptual Framework

The project is centered on a conception of what I refer to as “critical dialogue⁶” and it’s role in the work of the teacher participants – all first year teachers - with/in urban school communities. The concept of ‘critical dialogue’ and other terms that I use frequently throughout the project - Critical

⁶ Critical dialogue was not a term explicitly used during the UTEP coursework I taught and the four teacher participants were graduate students; rather, this was a term that I began using in the dissertation proposal and then used throughout the dissertation research phase

Dialogue Partnerships, Praxis, Critical Dialogic Stance, and Third Space - are considered and located in the literature below.

Critical Dialogue

“In a democracy there must be discussion, deliberation, dialogue. And while in every dialogue there are mistakes, misperceptions, struggle, and emotion, it is the disequilibrium of dialogue that leads to exploration, discovery, and change. Dialogue is improvisational and unrehearsed, and it is undertaken with the serious intention of engaging others. ... To some this is cause for despair, but for teachers it might provoke some sense of trembling excitement.”
Ayers, *To Teach*, 157-158

Critical Dialogue is the center of this dissertation project, but the specific term *critical* dialogue is not commonly found in the literature (e.g. Shor, 1992). My conception of critical dialogue draws from Shor and the Freirean conception of dialogue - “the transformative and liberatory process between teacher of students and students of teaching” (Freire, 1970), “the way by which (people) achieve significance as human beings,”(p.88), naming the world in order to transform it.

Using the term *critical* to describe dialogue may be redundant; for Freire, dialogue did not exist without criticality:

Finally, true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking - thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them.... Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. (1970, p.92)

My use of the term ‘critical dialogue’ is meant, in part, to bring criticality to the surface, either when I was practicing dialogue with the teacher participants or referring to dialogue as an instructional method between teacher participants and other members of their school community, a pedagogy for teaching and learning. Shor and Freire (1987) - in a dialogue, themselves - describe the dialogical method of teaching to be “Through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don’t know, we can act critically to transform reality” (p 98-99).

Shor (1992) summarizes Freire’s multi-layered notion of dialogue as “an instructional method, a theory about discourse and learning, and a politics for cultural democracy” (p. 86). Considering these layers, I conceptualize critical dialogue in the following ways: critical dialogue is the *instructional method* that I encourage the teacher participants to enact in their CPS classrooms, as well as the

instructional method we practice together in our Partnerships – a method which positions teachers and learners in a horizontal relationship, “seals together the relationship between the cognitive subjects, the subjects who know, and who try to know (Shor & Freire, 1987 p. 99). I also envision critical dialogue as a *theory about discourse and learning* that I advocate for in all urban school and teacher education experiences, as a counter to the banking approaches I often encounter in my work in both spaces. Finally, critical dialogue, in this project, is a *politics for the cultural democracy* in what I observe to be this current era of the hierarchical attempts to silence dissent and obfuscate the truth - locally, nationally, and globally. Critical dialogue is a call to bring our society into a process of collaboration, truth seeking, and transformative liberation and justice for all people.

Critical Dialogue Partnerships

I use the term ‘Critical Dialogue Partnerships’ to primarily describe the five monthly meetings between myself and the teacher participants, where we engaged in a critical dialogue. I use the term “Partnership” to emphasize the horizontal relationship of our work, co-examining the cognizable object of the teacher participants’ teaching practice through dialogue. During these meetings, we focused exclusively on the critical aspects of the teachers’ work, intentionally separating that focus from the technical aspects of in-classroom induction coaching.

There are some very recent examples in the literature of teacher educators engaging in research with graduates of their critical teacher education programs in ways that are similar to the Critical Dialogic Partnerships in this project (e.g. Oppenheim, Agarwal, Epstein, Oyler, and Sonu, 2010). Picower (2011) created a Social Justice Critical Inquiry Group with six former teacher education students who had become first year urban teachers; meeting biweekly, they explored the successes and challenges enacting critical pedagogy in their classrooms as first year teachers.

Praxis

As part of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships, the teacher participants and I engaged in a dialogic Praxis Cycle. I draw on Freire’s (1970, 1982) conception of Praxis, which shares with his conception of Dialogue, the “constitutive elements” of reflection and action (1970, p.87). In Praxis, humans are both in

a constant critical reflection on the world, and they are taking action to transform the world. Praxis is the core of Freire's epistemology (Au, 2007).

Praxis - critical reflection and intentional action - through dialogue with others, can lead to a deepening of critical consciousness (Freire 1970, 1982). I argue in this project that the Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships⁷ was a process by which the teacher participants and I created new knowledge, including knowledge that helped us continue to become critical teachers and humans. Some of this knowledge contributed to our resistance to the hegemonic socialization of schooling, and imagining ways to operate counter-hegemonically. I argue that these processes led to a deepening of our critical consciousness.

Critical scholars have created interpretations of a praxis cycle that includes details or steps. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) articulate a set of steps in a "Critical Praxis," that includes 1) Identify a problem 2) Research the problem 3) Develop a collective plan of action to address the problem, 4) Implement the collective plan of action 5) Evaluate the action, assess its efficacy, and re-examine the state of the problem. Praxis, a process, is neither linear nor necessarily methodical, but I draw on this use of "steps" in a praxis cycle in order to more clearly illustrate the process of our Critical Dialogue Partnerships (see Chapter 7) .

Critical Dialogic Stance

Another term that I use in this project that requires grounding in the literature is "Critical Dialogic Stance." This term refers to a critical positioning that the teacher participants operated from during their work in schools - in the classroom, in the schoolhouse, and with/in the community. Freire and Shor describe a "necessary posture":

..dialogue is a kind of necessary posture to the extent that humans have become more and more critically communicative beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on the reality as they make and remake it. (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 98)

⁷ This Praxis cycle was not a defined process at the start of the research process, but was conceptualized as a result of my analysis of the critical dialogues.

In this project, Critical Dialogic Stance was the ‘posture’ of the teacher participants toward the various members of their school community and the curriculum they hoped to teach. The metaphor of a ‘posture’ or ‘stance’ helps to make sense of how Critical Dialogic Stance operated. The teacher participants entered with a particular critical ‘stance’ that was not fixed, but oriented toward a critical approach to teaching. The socializing forces transmitted by the members of their school communities – students in the classroom, other adults in the schoolhouse, parents and other members of the local community – had varying influence on the Critical Dialogic Stance of the teacher participants. This led to *shifts* or *change* in their posture as they considered the socializing messages.

One of the arguments in this dissertation is that the Critical Dialogue Partnership between me and each teacher participant was an opportunity for the teacher participant to reconnect with their Critical Dialogic Stance and then to choose to maintain, strengthen, *re-position* their Critical Dialogic Stance toward their work as first year urban teachers,

Finally, the Critical Dialogic Stance of the teacher participant was not a guarantee that Critical Dialogue would occur. The Stance reflected a willingness or readiness to engage in Critical Dialogue on their part, a “necessary posture” for being able to respond critically and dialogically to impromptu opportunities with members of their school communities. But Critical Dialogue could only occur when the teacher participants’ stance was matched with a willingness and readiness on the part of the potential partner - a student, a colleague, a parent, etc. The process of securing Critical Dialogue with members of their school community was its own challenge, with its own set of unique moments of interest and resistance.

Third Space

The previously described Critical Dialogic Partnerships took place in a hybrid or third space that was neither the University or Teacher Education program nor the classroom or urban school. I drew from the literature of third space (Bhabba, 1994; Gutierrez, 2008; Zeichner, 2010; Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2011) when deciding on where to meet for our Critical Dialogue Partnerships. At the time, it was my

hope that creating in-between spaces might improve the likelihood of critical reflection, where we might view hegemonic perspectives as not “correct” or “true” (Bhabba, 1994).

Zeichner (2010) has called for hybrid or third spaces in teacher education as sites for deepening community and context-specific learning of teacher candidates. Recent teacher education research has built on these notions, creating partnerships between school and university based educators (e.g. Gutierrez, 2008; Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2011) that strengthen the preparation of preservice teacher candidates.

This dissertation proposes that teacher education be extended beyond preservice experience and into induction, using third spaces as sites for practicing teachers and teacher educators investigate and complicate the work of urban teaching in nuanced ways that may not be possible in other spaces.

US Schooling

Although the Critical Dialogue Partnerships took place in a third space away from the schools of the participants, the content of the Critical Dialogues was the day to day work of the teacher participants in their urban public schools, located within the context of US public schools. Therefore, a critical examination of US Schooling is needed. Specifically, I examine two approaches to US Schooling consistently practiced upon communities of color - denial and assimilationist. I then discuss the literature of US schooling in terms of reproduction and resistance theories. Finally, I examine the ways that hegemonic socialization is transmitted through US schooling.

Denial of Education and Assimilation

Spring (1994) identifies a number of educational methods that take place at the “intersection of culture resulting from globalization” that includes Cultural Genocide, Deculturalization, Assimilation, Cultural Pluralism, Denial of Education, and Hybridity (p.7-8). This framework is helpful for understanding the historical and contemporary approaches to education in the US for dominated and immigrant groups in the context of global colonialism and white supremacy. I draw on two of these

approaches - Denial of Education and Assimilation - to analyze the approach to education that the four teacher participants described in their Chicago Public Schools.

Historically, communities of color were denied education overtly, and in a manner expressly sanctioned by US law and policy (e.g. states made it illegal to educate enslaved Africans). While the law protects the right to an education for all US citizens, currently, it is arguable that the education taking place in many low-income, urban communities of color is under-resourced, hegemonic, and insufficient. Communities of color, in response to denial of education, have organized for an education that better meets their needs (e.g. Walker, 1996). However, those self-determined efforts are often aggressively undermined and sometimes ‘denied’ by various collaborating groups of power.

A recent example is the aggressive legal pursuit by mostly White lawmakers in Tuscon, Arizona to deny mostly Latinx students access to a culturally sustaining ethnic studies program, (Cammarota and Romero, 2006; Banks, 2012) even though that approach was shown to improve student engagement and achievement (Sleeter, 2011). The systematic closing of public schools systems in urban communities of color point to a form of denial of education, as well; recent examples include New Orleans, Philadelphia and Detroit, and here in Chicago, where the mayor and an unelected school board closed nearly 50 Chicago Public schools, most of which were located in communities of color (Lipman, Smith, Gutstein, & Dallacqua, 2012; Perlstein, 2013).

Assimilation education (Spring, 1994) is the forcing of state-driven education on immigrant communities and other marginalized groups deemed outside of the dominant culture where students and families are expected to abandon their own cultural, linguistic, and social identities and histories and adopt the dominant culture (Ogbu, 1978). First Nations/American Indians were subjected to a white settler colonial assimilationist education through the Carlisle school and other institutions (Spring, 1994; Emdin, 2016). Urban schools in the 19th and early 20th century were organized to “Americanize” the massive waves of (mostly white) immigrants from Southern, Eastern and Central Europe (Apple, 2004). An assimilation education continues to be perpetuated today on the local and state level in the form of English-only approaches to language acquisition, but also in the form of textbook publishers and

politicians arguing for Confederate heritage and the whitewashing of historical facts (Foner, 2010; Au, 2013).

In the context of this project focused on Critical Dialogue, neither of these forms of US schooling - a denial of education and assimilation - are critical or dialogic. On the contrary, these approaches to US schooling demand compliance and order, deemphasize critical analysis, dehumanize, and suppress agency and self-determination.

These approaches to US Schooling can be found in abundance in urban centers in the US, which have historically been, and continue to be home to many immigrant and marginalized communities of color. 'Urban,' in teacher education and policy usually does not refer to a place or geographic location, but more likely refers to certain people and places, most often people of color and relatively poor (Noguera, 2003). Leonardo & Hunter (2007) describe 'urban' as a...socially and discursively constructed as a place, which is part of the dialectical creation of the urban as both a real and imagined space." (p. 779). Tuck (2012) has said that the term 'urban' is "'often used in 'polite' conversation to refer to . . . poor people of color specifically" (p. 12).

Within this complexity of the term 'urban,' the notion of 'urban schools' has its own set of contradictions and complexity. Nonetheless, it is crucial to be as clear as possible about what is meant when discussing 'urban schools.' I draw on Stovall's articulation of this term (2004) to provide clarity and to humanize the people and circumstances of urban schools.

Never to bemoan the point, the facts remain: the vast majority of urban public school settings are populated with students of color. The overwhelming majority of these students of color come from racially isolated communities. Many of these communities have soaring populations of low-income families. Where schools are viewed as safe-havens for mainstream communities, they can often be viewed as menacing, mock holding cells for others. Most situations are somewhere in between. (p. 8-9)

Viewed through these lenses, urban schools serving low-income communities of color are not 'failing,' but are functioning as they have been designed to function within the larger context of US schooling (e.g. Apple, 2004; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Compounding the damage of systemic denial and an assimilationist curriculum described above, urban schools have been and continue to be

historically under-resourced (e.g. Kozol, 2012) and ‘assaulted’ by corporate reform (Watkins, 2012).

Because this study took place in a specific urban school system within the US – Chicago – it is necessary to examine the recent forces that have contributed to the conditions within the four schools of the participants. Recent Chicago Public Schools policies have been largely shaped by collaboration between business leaders, two Mayors (Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emmanuel) and the mayoral-appointed CEO. In the last decade and a half, various members of these groups have enacted policies that include major expansion of charter schools, the closing of over 50 neighborhood public schools, and the creation of ‘turnaround schools’ managed by non-profit organizations. These policies have been presented as ‘reform,’ but for the most part the results are mixed (Kumashiro, 2010; De la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, R. D., 2013). The impact of these policies has been felt most in low-income communities of color, who have organized and resisted as part of various coalitions that include grassroots community organizations, parents, and the Chicago Teachers Union (Perlstein, 2016).

The Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL), the largest turnaround school management organization in Chicago, ran Clifton Elementary, where one of the participants in this study, Olivia, was a teacher. Founded in 2001 with funding from venture capitalists, AUSL began as a teacher education program before expanding into the business of school turnaround, now managing 31 schools in CPS. The turnaround model’s school organization policies rather than close schools, leave students enrolled and, instead, fire the entire school staff before re-hiring (often) all new teachers. In some cases – including Clifton – this means disrupting teacher student and community relationships, many of which were led by teachers of color (Lipman, et al, 2012). Locating urban schools - and specifically Chicago Public Schools - within the larger history of denial and assimilation practiced in US Schools is necessary for the type of critical dialogue between teacher educators and urban teachers examined in this study.

Reproduction and Resistance

In my critical analysis of urban US schooling, I draw in part from Reproduction theory, which asserts that the primary purpose and function of US schools is the reproduction of society, and focuses on “how power is used to mediate between schools and the interests of capital” (Giroux, 1983).

Reproduction theory states that schools are socially reproductive in “the relationships of authority and control between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and students and their work replicate the hierarchical division of labor” (Bowles & Gintis, 1975, p.12). Schools also reproduce culturally, transmitting values and cultural capital that contribute to the reproduction of economic hierarchies, all under the assumption of independence and impartiality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bernstein 1990).

Resistance theory, critical of overly deterministic qualities of reproduction theory, sees schools as a space of contestation and resistance (Giroux, 1983). I draw on the critical theories that see schools as sites of both resistance and reproduction. Teachers, in order to avoid enacting harmful reproduction and engage in resistance, must be “wide-awake” and “stimulate the awareness of the questionable, to aid in the identification of the thematically relevant, to beckon beyond the everyday.” (Greene, 1971). This requires a critical hopefulness where we recognize that schools are both windows into and mirrors of our society (Ayers, 2001).

The teacher participants in this project came in with a theoretical knowledge of the historical approaches of denial and assimilationist approaches to US Schooling directed at immigrant and marginalized communities of color, and applied that knowledge to their teaching experience. They had a consciousness about their capacity to be both reproducers of those approaches and transmitters of other aspects of the status quo; simultaneously, they were conscious of their capacity to be producers of resistance to those approaches. The tension between those two forces was a topic of our critical dialogues and a focus of this project.

Hegemonic Socialization

Some of the literature of teacher socialization that does not specifically address critical theory or hegemony (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975) has been focused on the ways that teachers enter the profession of

teaching. Because the profession has historically been weakly organized (Lortie, 1975), individuals within the institution tend to act from their own socialized beliefs and dispositions rather than from an organized set of institutional practices.

This project draws on a ‘critical’ analysis of the socialization of teachers (Zeichner and Gore, 1989), which views teachers as participators in the process of both reproduction of the status quo and the production of opportunities for resistance. In the critical tradition, the socialization of teachers occurs at three levels: *interactive* (pupils and the ecology of the classroom), *institutional* (colleagues and evaluators/administrators), and *cultural* (community, parents, and society, at large). I draw from this frame in Chapter 4, 5, and 6 to analyze the critical dialogue between the four teacher participants and the members of their urban school - in the classroom, in the schoolhouse, and in the community/society.

Understanding the critical perspective on the socialization of teachers requires an understanding of ‘hegemony’ (Gramsci, 1971). Apple (2004), describes hegemony not as an abstract notion, but a ‘saturation of our very consciousness,” an “organized assemblage of meanings and practices...values and actions which are *lived*” (p. 4). The ‘saturation’ of hegemonic ideology is often transmitted through notions of ‘common-sense,’ which makes recognizing and resisting hegemony difficult. Practices and perspectives are “masked by or couched in concepts to which we often feel social pressure to conform.” In schools, these practices and perspectives may include “tradition, professionalism, morality, and normalcy” (Kumashiro, 2004, p. XXIII).

Considering contemporary notions of hegemonic socialization of teachers through the lens of Critical Race Theory in Education (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), this ‘saturation’ takes place within a system of white supremacy (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2004a), the centralization of the knowledge and culture of whiteness and a marginalization of the knowledge and culture of communities of color. Teachers bring years of racialized socializing perspectives with them into schools that they, in turn, may transmit to their students. These may include deficit notions of the knowledge and lived experience of communities of color.

CRT in Education also helps to re-examine the motives of school policies that claim to be giving low-income communities of color a ‘choice’ about the education ‘options.’ Many young folks come to cities wanting to be teachers and participate in this process, already socialized to believe that they are working and teaching to promote racial justice and providing new and improved school options to low income communities of color. When these policies are considered through the lens of Interest convergence (Bell, 1980), the socializing messages of white supremacy are exposed, and we can view these policies to be:

“...in the best interests of white policy makers to shift the curricular focus of schools in ways that make them attractive to traditionally marginalized communities, while at the same time rendering them less accessible to the least desired segments of the population.” (Stovall, 2013)

Other critical theories help bring to the surface the hegemonic socialization of schools and teachers. Race feminism (e.g. Wing, 1997), materialist feminism (e.g. Lather, 1987), queer (e.g. Kumashiro, 2000) and other critical gender theories and pedagogies (e.g. Weiler, 1988) recognize the ways that teachers are socialized to be reproducers and producers of heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of gender through gender roles in schools⁸. These critical theories all give teachers direction and perspectives that resist reproduction in schools and promote resistance and conscious action that produces knowledge that draws on and centers the assets, knowledge, and histories of communities of color (Yosso, 2005).

Critical Teacher Education

Teacher socialization can be understood dialectically; the teacher participants in this study are both socialized to reproduce the status quo and have the agency to resist and contest the status quo. The education and preparation that teachers take part in can therefore have a powerful influence on how teachers choose to enact or resist hegemonic socialization. Critical teacher education coursework that centers the theories of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992; Kincheloe, 2008; Darder et al, 2003),

⁸ I acknowledge that teachers are socialized into other hegemonic perspectives, reproducing and producing knowledge in terms of sexuality, able-bodiedness, religion etc., but in this study I focus in particular on socialization of teachers in terms of race and gender.

critical curriculum studies (Apple, 2004; Au, 2012; Schubert, 1986), and critical social theory (Leonardo, 2004b, Collins, 1991) can help teacher candidates continue to complicate their understanding of the function of schooling and present pedagogies for challenging domination and moving toward transformation and liberation.

Kincheloe (2008) describes critical pedagogy as, among other things “grounded on social and educational vision of justice and equality, constructed on the belief that education is inherently political, dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering.” (p. 5) A critical teacher education that enacts this vision in their own pedagogy makes visible the issues of justice and equality in education, engages teacher candidates in the practice of critical self-reflection and prioritizes a teacher’s critical consciousness as a necessity for working in solidarity with urban school communities.

An enacted critical pedagogy in a K-12 classroom is sometimes referred to in the literature as ‘teaching for social justice,’ a term that has been adopted by many across a wide spectrum of beliefs. In an attempt to organize a disparate set of set of principles, there are some clear agreements (e.g. Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009) that a social justice oriented teaching practice includes the facilitation of educative experiences that inquire into, challenge and work to change local, societal and global oppression, and where students and teachers collaborate in order to learn to be active participants in a democracy. In this project, I draw on Ayers (2001) description of a kind of teaching where the “avowed purpose is to combat silence, to defeat erasure and invisibility, to resist harm and redress grievances, teaching with the explicit goal of promoting a more balanced, fair, and equitable social order (p.163)

Curricular Standpoint

Amongst the social justice oriented approaches to teaching, this project draws specifically from Au’s Curricular Standpoint (2012), which “applies standpoint theory to curriculum studies as a way to explicitly recognize the power relations that are embedded in both the curriculum and the study of curriculum.” (p. 9-10). Curricular Standpoint can be summed up as:

Curricular standpoint essentially recognizes that power relations structure the accessibility of educational environments, as well as the pedagogic discourse that is produced to communicate those relations...Curricular standpoint, by using the

social location of the marginalized or oppressed as its starting point for engaging with knowledge, effectively works to make particular knowledge (and epistemologies) accessible to students vis-a-vis educational environments that potentially validate the social, economic, cultural, and political experiences of those same marginalized or oppressed communities. (p.89)

There are strong examples enacted by teachers in urban schools with students of color that could be considered curricular standpoint (Camangian, 2010; Akom, 2009, Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Emdin, 2010). Gutstein (2007) describes two mathematics units, one completed, one proposed, that begin with the social location of his students at an urban high school that draws out and helps reveal community, classical and critical knowledge. Both units were co-constructed, driven by student curiosity and anger about injustice in their lives, and connected and extended by teachers using a critical lens on mathematics and pedagogy.

A common misconception that I've encountered when working with K-8 teachers is that this type of approach to teaching and learning is exclusive to high schools and beyond. The teachers participants in this project were middle school teachers who believed that it was possible to teach from a curricular standpoint, but sought concrete models and examples. In our coursework together in UTEP prior to this project, we examined practitioner research from urban elementary and middle school classrooms that could be considered curricular standpoint (e.g. Souto-Manning, 2010; Schultz & Oyler, 2006; Turner & Font, 2007; Lim & Barton, 2006). Souto-Manning (2010) describes her work in a Kindergarten classroom enacting Freirean Culture Circles to help students inquire into institutional injustice they noticed taking place in their school. Turner & Font (2007) engage their middle school students in a mathematics investigation that drew on student observations about hallway size safety issues and inequity within their NYC school building.

Critical Care

Another aspect of a critical and social justice-oriented approach to teaching that is at the center of this project is drawn from the work of care in schools, specifically the Critical Care of students of color. Critical Care in schools is situated in the literature of "resource pedagogies" (Paris, 2012) that recognizes the need for teachers and schools to be culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) or culturally relevant (Ladson-

Billings, 1995). These pedagogies call on teachers to build respectful, supportive classroom communities centered on the funds of knowledge of their historically marginalized students of color (Moll, et al, 1992).

The literature on care in schools begins with Noddings (1984), whose initial framework stressed that a student's success in school was largely dependent on the care of teachers and schools, including high expectations and a belief in the student's ability. According to Noddings (1992) a teacher sees her role as building relationships based on trust and care and must "construct educational objectives cooperatively."

Valenzuela (1999) builds on Noddings' framework and makes the distinction between a teacher's notion of *aesthetic* care - based in the institutional norms of schooling, where teachers expect students to 'care' about school, ideas and achievement - and a student's notion of *authentic* care, based on reciprocal relationships between student and teacher built on trust. Valenzuela uses the term *cariño* to describe the authentic care between teachers and non-dominant students of color in her study; others (Dunacn-Andrade, 2006; Lewis, Ream, Bocian, Cardullo, Hammond, & Fast, 2012) have used *cariño* to describe the critical care enacted in classrooms in communities of color. Nieto (2005) calls this "solidarity with, and empathy for students."

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) sees this movement of caring in schools intersecting with what she calls a 'womanist experience of caring' (p. 71). Drawn from case studies of black women teachers, a womanist experience of caring is a form of mothering, or 'othermothering,' connected to political activism and community engagement that goes beyond simply about helping a kid pass a test or getting kids in the 8th grade to be quiet. Instead, an othermothering critical care points to the history of Black Women teachers who saw their responsibility to share power with students and educate students of the challenges of society, to tell the truth.

Rolon-Dow's (2005) case study of the relationships between Puerto Rican girls and their teachers uses a Lat/Crit lens to extend the definition of caring to include not only the relationship between teacher and student, but also the teachers perceptions of her students' families and communities, noting the ways that some teachers "implicate the race/ethnicity of community residents as causing care deficits, while at

the same time ignoring the role of race and racism in creating particular historical and political circumstances that disadvantage communities populated by people” (Rolon-Dow, p. 93).

Duncan-Andrade (1997) describes a “trust” bond as one of several key pillars of urban teaching, that describes the caring relationship between teacher and students where the teacher is willing to ‘ride or die’ with them:

In the case of these ...teachers, the move from being liked to being loved did not happen because of the demands they made of students. It happened because of the love and support that accompanied those raised expectations. Sometimes this was simple encouragement, but many times it meant amplifying the personal support given to students is one that leads to one students can express indirectly and sometimes directly. (p. 634)

Critical Care links strongly with and can be considered consistent with Au’s Curricular Standpoint, theorizing teacher relationship building as beginning from the standpoint of the students and communities of color. and drawn from political clarity about the ways that schools and teachers have historically marginalized low-income communities of color. Critical caring individual relationships are reciprocal, and they become part of a community of relationships – in a classroom, in a school, with/in a community – that promote activism, justice, and truth telling.

I see Critical Caring relationships as part of a liberatory dialogic pedagogy that humanizes the partner in the relationship and promotes a mutual deepening of critical consciousness. I extend this notion of Critical Care to apply not just to students, but conceptualize what it might mean for all members of a school community to engage in a dialogic Critical Care with one another.

Racial and Gender Mirroring

There is an emerging field of research related to the impact of the race and gender of both the teacher and students on the levels of trust and perceptions of ability (e.g. Banks, et al, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Howard & Aleman, 2008). This project draws on this research when examining the way that the four teacher participants (2 women of color, 1 white woman, 1 white man) perceive and are perceived by their (almost exclusively) students of color.

Students of all races have been shown to have more favorable perceptions of teachers of color over white teachers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Racial mirroring or race matching can have positive

academic and social emotional benefits for students of color, who may perceive their teachers of color as role models and other parent-like figures (e.g. Auerbach, 2007). A number of studies have shown that teachers base their expectations of students based on their race, and that teachers expect the least of Latinx and Black students (e.g. Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007).

These studies reflect the role of socialization in schools; teachers - white and of color - who lack a critical perspective on the way that socialization affects them and their students may not see a problem with, or be aware of, the hegemonic socialization they are experiencing and reproducing. This lack of awareness may be connected to ones' inability to see oneself as an oppressor, a function of White Supremacy (Sleeter, 2001; Leonardo, 2002). In schools, this phenomenon may manifest in teachers seeing themselves as saviors there to help students of color 'escape' from their communities (Picower, 2009). These beliefs in schools go largely "unrecognized and unchallenged" in our society because we have been "convinced that schools are neutral, are non-oppressive, and *should not* be taking a stand one way or the other on issues of oppression (Kumashiro, 2004, p.xxiv).

There are a number of studies that examine the ways that students at different levels of education perceive the care of their teachers as connected to the race of the students and the race of the teachers (Garza, 2009; Hayes et al., 1994; Wentzel, 1997). These studies show that there are significant overlaps across race that define caring dispositions and actions, but there are also racial and cultural differences that contribute to different perceptions. Teachers working in urban schools must understand their own conceptions of care - toward individuals and toward a community of students - as well as the perceptions of students and families of different racial and cultural backgrounds in order to effectively communicate an ethic and a demonstration of critical care.

This is particularly significant in urban schools like the ones in CPS where the four teacher participants taught; students of color make up nearly 50% of school age children in the US, but people of color make up only 18% of the US teaching force, and only 20% of US Principals (US Department of Education, 2016). In high-poverty urban systems, there is greater representation of teachers of color (37%

nationally), but even higher concentrations of students of color. Chicago Public Schools, for example, has 50% teachers of color and 90% students of color (Chicago Public Schools, 2016).

Teacher Induction

In this project, I am proposing an induction praxis that draws on critical traditions on teacher education and extends those approaches to teacher induction. However, the literature of teacher induction, which describes the work of mentoring novice teachers when they enter the profession, appears to lack a robust, established set of critical perspectives that put forward a set of induction practices that could support novice critical teachers entering the profession. In addition, there is a gap in the literature that addresses the bridge between teacher education and induction.

Purposes

The most systematic on-the-job training, in-class teacher education falls under what the literature refers to as new teacher ‘induction.’ New teachers have always been inducted into the field “with or without a formal program” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). One common version of induction is the veteran ‘buddy,’ mentor down the hall from the new teacher. Support from this informal or formal mentor is unpredictable, reliant on goodwill, and likely informed by an apprenticeship, do-as-I-do model (2001).

Reviews of the literature on teacher induction show that three primary motivations for induction of new teachers include helping teachers adjust to their school context, stay in their jobs, and teach in ways that support curriculum standards (Wang, Odell, and Schwillie, 2008). These motivations stem from what many in the field see as a problem with teacher attrition; data from 2000 suggests that one-third of teachers nationwide left the field after three years, and one-half left within five years (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Within that group of exiting teachers, teachers of color are more likely to leave than white teachers (US Department of Education, 2016).

Attrition is worse in urban systems, where teachers not only leave the profession, but also leave for more affluent suburban schools; teachers in high poverty areas are 50% more likely to leave than at low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001). This is further complicated by the fact that there is a higher concentration of beginning teachers in high poverty urban schools compared to other areas (Wei, Darling-

Hammond & Adamson, 2010). In addition, teachers at high poverty schools are more likely to be absent and miss work (Fitzpatrick, 2016b).

By the early 2000s, nearly half of US States implemented an induction policy, but that number has plateaued; statewide induction policies still hover around half, and only 16 states provide funding (Goldrick, 2016). Still, nearly 75% of beginning teachers in the US now receive induction support (Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010).

Pedagogy

So what are induction programs and coaches telling new teachers? Are they reinforcing the status quo, socializing teachers into an already oppressive system, and promoting an approach to teaching that will reproduce that same oppressive system moving forward? Or are they promoting a critical and dialogical stance toward the socialization process in US Schooling, helping nurture the liberatory practices encouraged by critical teacher education?

The importance of a critical pedagogy of induction takes on even more significance when we consider proportionally to the rest of the work force, there are more new teachers than experienced; the typical teacher in US schools in 2012 is in her first year, compared to in her 15th year in 1987-88 (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). And, as Darling-Hammond (2006) explains below, the lack of preparation leaves teachers entering the field with limited understanding of the critical complexity of teaching:

However, in recent years, under pressure from opponents of teacher education and with incentives for faster, cheaper alternatives (see, e.g., U.S. Department of Education, 2002), teacher education as an enterprise has probably launched more new weak programs that under-prepare teachers, especially for urban schools, than it has further developed the stronger models that demonstrate what intense preparation can accomplish. As a result, beginning teacher attrition has continued to increase (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003), and the teaching force is becoming increasingly bimodal. Although some teachers are better prepared than they ever were before, a growing number who serve the most vulnerable students enter teaching before they have been prepared to teach and are increasingly ill prepared for what they must accomplish (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003)

Rather than focus on a more critical approach, recent induction pedagogy has focused on coaching teachers toward academic outcomes, consistent with national curriculum standards (Sweeny & DeBolt, 2000; Wang, et al, 2008). A focus on outcomes in teacher induction appears to be consistent

with other reform movements within education, specifically a practice-based approach to teacher education and a standardized testing approach to teaching and learning inside schools. The overall philosophy of these approaches - simply stated - is to focus on a legitimized content that perpetuates the status quo.

Formal programs that rely on one-on-mentoring can be reinforcing status-quo norms and practices (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Zeichner & Gore, 1989). Many current “reform” approaches deemphasize preparation for critical approaches to teaching in favor of preparation in the mechanical “practice” aspects of teaching (Zeichner, 2012).

There appears to be a need for teacher educators and other mentors to have both a critical approach to their work in education and some consciousness about the process of mentorship as an educative model. But as Cochran Smith (2004) and Zeichner (2005) have both shown, teacher educators receive little explicit instruction or opportunities to practice critical teacher education approaches in their graduate programs.

Critical and Dialogic Approaches to Teacher Induction

There are some approaches to mentoring or inducting of new teachers that have either critical or dialogic roots. The Cognitive Coaching (e.g. Edwards & Newton, 1995) approach to one-on-one mentorship is a facilitative model that encourages dialogue between teacher and mentor. The underlying assumption is that the teacher (or person being coached) already has the knowledge to solve one’s own problems, and the role of the cognitive coach is to help lead the coachee to a self-determined solution. “Culturally proficient coaching” (e.g. Robins, Lindsey, & Lindsey, 2005) attempts to combine the cognitive coaching with a cultural proficiency.

Ladson-Billings, in *Crossing over to Canaan* (2001), proposed a hypothetical Urban Teacher Academy where graduates receive a provisional certificate and spend a year teaching in a smaller than usual classroom, have an onsite mentor, and quarterly meetings with the program and their school that includes feedback but also requires the new teacher to demonstrate what she’s learned and is learning,

along the way. This approach to induction support centers the need of the novice and creates a dialogic relationship between the novice, the university, and the urban school stakeholders.

Stovall and Duncan-Andrade's (2006) study of UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA) spotlights a teacher development program to support new teachers develop tools for turning the hopelessness and despair that can accompany new urban teachers and turn it into hope and action. Using critical inquiry, this group of racially diverse teachers met weekly, using a five-week cycle (critical reading, large group lesson planning, small group lesson planning, dialogue about student work, and video analysis) that reflects the praxis of critical dialogic word. These critical approaches demonstrate a movement in teacher induction that supports those teacher education that prepare teachers to be critical, justice-oriented teachers.

Conclusion

The literature that I've highlighted here provides the theoretical underpinnings of the Critical Dialogue that I engaged in as part of a dialogic Praxis cycle in Partnership with four first year teachers in Chicago Public Schools, all graduates of the critical and urban-focused teacher education program where I am an instructor. The Critical Partnerships were an induction model that was focused specifically on the critical examination of the teaching practice of first years, which could be characterized in terms of curriculum as operating from a curricular standpoint of the black and brown low income students that they were their students last year. The Partnership also focused on the critical examination of their enactment of a dialogic Critical Care with their kids in the classroom, with fellow teachers, administrators, parents and families, and community members.

The examination of the role of hegemonic socialization of teachers in the experience of the four teacher participants, who, like other critical urban teachers are "forced into a bunker mentality to protect themselves from the onslaught of institutional resistance" (Stovall & Duncan-Andrade, 2006). In their study of Belgian teachers, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) referred to this clash as "praxis shock" whereby "teachers' confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that

puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test, challenges some of them, and confirms others” (p. 105).

This project is proposing a push for the induction of new teachers to be critical and dialogic, and focus less on the socialization of teachers into an already oppressive field, an induction process focused on staving off attrition or preparing teachers to (re)produce the status quo. Rooting in the critical literature grounds this critical induction process in a liberatory and transformative pedagogy consistent with the pedagogy it promotes in its classroom teacher partnerships.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

Study Design

This dissertation project took place during the 2015- 2016 academic school year, September 2015 through June 2016. This was the first year of teaching for the four teacher participants in the study, all middle school teachers in four different Chicago Public Schools and 2015 graduates of UChicagoUTEP, the teacher education program where I was their instructor. The Critical Dialogue Partnerships that make up the basis of this study consisted of five Critical Dialogue meetings between me and each individual participant (twenty in total), every two months across their first school year (e.g. October, December, etc.), usually lasting about two hours.

The project design was intended to surface two major phenomenon. The first examined how each teacher participant perceived their ability to enact a critical and dialogic pedagogy with the various members of their school community. The scope of that critical and dialogic pedagogy included, but was not limited to, the teaching and learning that went on between the participant and her students in the classroom as well as the critical dialogue that took place informally between the teacher participant and her students, fellow teachers, school administrators, parents and families, community members, and society throughout the day and year.

The second phenomenon of this project was the inquiry into the Critical Dialogue Partnership, itself, as an Induction Praxis. Specifically I wanted to see how a process of Critical Dialogue between a teacher educator and former students from a critically oriented social justice teacher education program might influence those students as teachers in their first year in a public urban school system. Though the inquiry was open-ended and exploratory, one anticipated theme was the illumination of the teacher participant's experience of socialization in their first year teaching in an urban school.

The research questions I explored are arranged to reflect the two phenomenon:

1. The Participant's Critical Dialogue with members of the School Community
 - a. What happens when four teachers from UChicago UTEP, a program that centers critical dialogue as part of their urban teacher education, enter their first classrooms and begin engaging in what they understand to be critical dialogue with school stakeholders?
 - b. What are the various meanings of Critical Dialogue to these new teachers, and what does Critical Dialogue look like in practice?
 - c. When, where, why, and with whom are they having critical dialogue?
 - d. If it appears to only happen in certain spaces, what do they (and I) make of that?
2. Critical Dialogue between a Participant and me, a Teacher Educator
 - a. What happens when a teacher participant/graduate of UTEP engages in a critical dialogue with me, their teacher educator?
 - b. How does that critical dialogue, according to each of them, affect their thinking about their work or change their practice?

When it came to selecting an appropriate educational research method, I considered that each of the two phenomena fell into two distinct research camps. The first phenomenon arguably resembles a traditional qualitative research study. As an education researcher, I was inquiring into the self-reported experiences of the four participants as they navigated their first year of teaching. Transcribing our recorded dialogues, I looked for themes and analyzed their ideas in a conceptual framework rooted in theory. Though the dialogues were intentionally not interviews or semi-structured interviews, one could argue that this part of the study certainly borrows from qualitative traditions using ethnographic methods, including embedding myself in a context with the participants for an extended period of time with an attention to the broad sociopolitical context.

However, I did not observe the participants in their professional context engaging in their work; instead I intentionally engaged in a dialogue with them about their own interpretations of those pieces of the work. Similarly, my analysis of the transcribed dialogues was not singularly focused on the response

of the participant but on the overall dialogic exchange between us. In these ways, this project is less traditional qualitative methodology and more a research methodology that is dialogical, pedagogically consistent with the Freirean conception of a dialogic pedagogy used in my teacher education courses, advocate for in schools, and encourage in the practice of the teacher participants.

When I consider these aspects of the project, alongside my intentional focus on the Praxis cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships, themselves, I see this dissertation research as an example of Practitioner Inquiry. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) have referred to Practitioner Inquiry as “working the dialectic” – research and practice, analysis and action, inquiry and experience, theorizing and doing.

Cochran-Smith and Donnell (2006) describe Practitioner Inquiry as a type of education research where the “practitioner is the researcher, the professional context is the research site, and practice itself is the focus of the study” (p.503). Using this definition, I perceive myself to be both practitioner and researcher, using the third space of our partnerships as the research site, focusing our study on the practice of Critical Dialogue itself. This research is not being done to the participants, rather we are partners in an Induction practice, and as a result, partners in Teacher Education and Induction research.

There are a number of recent studies (Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, and Sonu, 2010; Athanases and Oliveira, 2008; Cochran-Smith, et al, 2009; Freedman & Apple, 2009; McDonald, Bowman, & Brayko, 2013; Picower, 2011; Whipp, 2013) where education researchers and teacher educators from critical, social-justice oriented teacher education programs engaged in research with former students who are now urban teachers. However, some of these studies position the researcher as program evaluator (e.g. McDonald, et al., 2013) – a different research method from my dialogic practitioner inquiry approach. In some cases, the researcher uses a critical approach.

Picower (2011), used “design-based research” to study the critical inquiry project sessions she facilitated and the written reflections of six graduates of the teacher education program where she was an instructor who were now first year teachers in NYC public schools. In this study, Picower is simultaneously the researcher inquiring into the practice of her graduates, and the facilitator of a practice - a critical inquiry group.

Smith-Maddox and Solorzano's (2002) used a form of practitioner inquiry similar to the methodology I'm using in this project in their research on the Freirean pedagogy that they enacted with their teacher education students. However, this research is rooted in the researchers' preservice teacher education courses, not in the work of teachers that have graduated from their program.

Context: UChicagoUTEP

Given that the participants in the study are graduates of the University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program (UChicago UTEP) and I am an instructor in that program, a brief summary of UChicago UTEP and of the three major courses that I taught to the participants is necessary.

The University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program (UChicago UTEP) is a 2-year MAT and Certification program located in the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute; the four teacher participants are all graduates of UTEP's Elementary (K-8) program, which consists of a Foundations Year (3 quarters – Fall, Winter, Spring) and a Residency Year (a Summer and two semesters of a typical CPS school, Fall and Spring).

UTEP Students are organized in cohorts of 20-25 students per year; the four participants in this study were enrolled in the program during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. Their cohort included a wide range of identities (race, class, age, gender, sexuality) and experiences (academic, economic, work experience). Recruitment efforts are directed toward diversity, giving priority to candidates who bring urban experience and a commitment to social justice. Cohorts take all coursework together through both years of the program.

UTEP Staff is made up of almost exclusively former urban Public School classroom teachers; nearly all taught in Chicago Public Schools (except for me, who taught in New York City public schools). Only the two founding directors have PhDs and staff members see themselves as practitioner scholars. At the time of the study, the staff were majority women of color. I mention these demographics because they are not the norm of traditional university-based teacher education programs, and are a reflection on the programs part of an intentionality to be practitioner-centered.

As an instructor and advisor in the program, I worked with the four participants and their cohort across both preservice years of the program. In 2013-14, during their first year (called Foundations Year), I served as advisor to three of the four participants, and was the primary instructor for four of their Foundations courses (3 quarters of Guided Fieldwork and 1 quarter of Philosophy of Education) and co-instructor for three more (Fall, Winter, and Spring Soul Strand). In 2014-15, I “looped” with the four participants and their cohort, following them into the second preservice year (called Residency Year) where I was their Field Supervisor and co-instructor for the Fall Semester, and advisor for half of the cohort (including all four participants). I also taught the cohort Social Studies Methods in the Spring of Residency year.

Below I detail the three courses where I was the lead instructor at UTEP for the four teacher participants; I include these course details to articulate how many of the key theoretical underpinnings of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships were introduced and developed with the participants when they were teacher candidates. Afterwards, I briefly describe some of the additional courses and other educative experiences within UTEP that the teacher participants experienced contributed to their work knowledge of critical teaching practices.

Course 1: Guided Fieldwork Course and “Stakeholder Dialogues.”

In the Fall of 2013 - the first quarter of the first-year of the program for the four project participants - I taught a 10 week Guided Fieldwork course in UTEP’s Foundations Year. Because this course was both an introduction to Chicago Public Schools and to the critical analysis of US schooling, I created a syllabus that combined critical educational theory (e.g. Jean Anyon’s “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work”), alongside pieces written by authors who came through Chicago Public Schools (e.g. the poem “High School Training Ground” by former CPS student Malcolm London), and some media pieces related to either the system or the specific school we were visiting.

Over the 10 weeks, I led guided field experiences to six neighborhood Chicago Public schools located in six different geographic locations across the city. At each visit, I coordinated and facilitated

three repeated elements – a discussion between the teacher candidates and the principal, a set of structured classroom observations, and, at the center of each visit, six “stakeholder dialogues.”

At the start of the quarter, each cohort member chose a “stakeholder” group of their preference from a preselected list that I devised – administration, teachers, staff, students, parents, community members. The 23 cohort members in Cohort 11 were then broken into stakeholder inquiry groups of 3 or 4 teacher candidates that remained together throughout the course. At each school that we visited, each stakeholder inquiry group of teacher candidates would have a 45-60 minute dialogue with the stakeholders from that school (e.g. the “staff” stakeholder group of teacher candidates would have a dialogue with the staff members of School A, and the following week those same teacher candidates would have a dialogue with the staff members of School B). Teacher candidates co-planned their questions and improved on them each week. Explicit efforts were made to make it clear to all participating that these dialogues were not ‘interviews’ nor were the groups ‘conducting research.’ These were meant to be learning exchanges. After every visit, each teacher candidate was required to write a “field note” detailing a critical analysis of the following:

- reflection on the dialogue with stakeholders
- reflection on how the teacher candidate believes they were perceived by others
- reflection on how candidate’s thinking is shifting over time about urban schools and urban teaching based on the dialogue experience.

As a conclusion to the course, I asked the students to do an analysis of what was learned and to make a list of recommendations for work with each of the stakeholder groups in their future roles as CPS teachers. In addition, teacher candidates were expected to choose one of the six visited schools and volunteer at least 12 hours at the school before the start of the next quarter and write a final reflection about that experience. The volunteer experience was meant to reinforce the idea that these dialogues were exchanges.

Course 2: Philosophy of Education.

In the Winter of 2014 - the second quarter of the first-year of the program for the participants - I taught a 10 week Philosophy of Education course in UTEP's Foundations Year. This course was intended to introduce students to the history and philosophy of critical approaches to curriculum and instruction. The first third of the course focused on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire and other critical theorists and pedagogues, including several 'dialogues' or 'talking books' (e.g. *We Make the Road by Walking*, by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire). A major performance task required my students to form partnerships and write 'dialogue' papers inspired by these examples on any of the major themes of the course up to that point. Students were asked to then reflect not only on the learning of content from that experience but also on the dialogical experience.

In addition, I used the chapter topics ("Seeing the Student," Creating an Environment for Learning," etc) of Ayers' (2001) *To Teach* as generative themes that we explored using the pedagogy of Culture Circles (Freire, 1973). The final project for the course required students to individually plan and deliver a lesson to their peers that was an example of enacted critical pedagogy. The content of the lesson had to have a critical perspective and the enactment of the lesson had to be an experiment with critical pedagogy (e.g. a number of students facilitated problem-posing sessions in culture circles).

Course 3: Social Studies Methods

In Winter 2015, during the second quarter of the second year of the program, I taught the teacher participants and their cohort in a Social Studies Methods course in UChicago UTEP's Residency Year that was meant to support their planning and teaching in their residency sites (essentially student teaching). The first half of the course was designed around the planning and enactment of a mini-inquiry unit that drew on the funds of knowledge and interests of the students in their classrooms. This was, for many, the first time students tried to plan and enact something that was arguably an example of curricular standpoint. The teacher participants and the others in their cohort had a second opportunity to plan and enact a unit plan later that semester that reflected their emerging understanding of critical teaching and attempts to build curriculum from the standpoint of their students and the community of their school.

Other UChicago UTEP Experiences/Courses.

The above only describe some of the courses the four participants took at UTEP; there were many other experiences, readings, and courses that had an influence on the beliefs and practices that they carried out as first year teachers during this project. Other significant experiences and courses include:

- Soul Strand - a Foundations course series (3 quarters) exploring structural privilege and oppression and created opportunities for students to examine their social locations and engage in dialogue with peers about equity issues in education.
- Critical Analysis of Urban Education - a Residency course that continued the themes of the Soul Strand course (described above), but with a focus on making sense of these topics as they experience them in their classroom, school, and community experiences.
- Community Ethnography Project – done in small groups, students produce an ethnography of the urban school community where they are residents for the semester. Highlights of these ethnographies include community asset maps, dialogues with school stakeholders, and reflections about the challenges they faced engaging in this work.

All of these courses and assignments were part of a shared base of knowledge between me and the four teacher participants during our Critical Dialogue Partnerships. These common experiences and texts were often accessed, either directly or indirectly, in our Critical Dialogues, giving us a common language and a set of theoretical tools to draw from as we engaged in critical reflection about their teaching practice.

Participants

Selection

23 members of UTEP's Cohort 11 graduated in 2015, and 21 decided to stay in Chicago and were hired in June 2015 by Chicago Public Schools (two others moved to other urban districts). Because the project was built around in-person critical dialogues, only the 21 members hired by CPS were eligible for consideration for this project. The 21 staying in CPS were informed about this study in June 2015, but were not formally invited to participate until August 2015, so that the potential participants were no

longer officially my students nor beholden to UTEP for assessment or accreditation. Additionally, I waited until August 2015 to begin recruitment in order to be able to consider the participant's school and grade level. 16 of the 21 members expressed interest in participating.

One of several possible reasons for the relatively high interest may have been the close relationship I had built with the cohort over the two years. Another reason may have been because I agreed, as part of the study, to be the in-class induction coach for whichever participants were selected. Graduates of UTEP receive three years of in-classroom Induction coaching, provided by UTEP staff members, who are former CPS classroom teachers; members of Cohort 11 may have volunteered to be part of this project because they knew me better than they knew the induction coaches that would have been assigned to them. As I considered the 16 interested potential participants, I wanted to be sure that there was 'diversity' across several demographic and professional criteria. The primary diversity criteria I considered were: race of the teacher, gender of the teacher, and school location within the city.

In terms of race, I selected two participants of color and two white participants; this intentionality afforded me the opportunity to problematize how the race of the teacher might factor into the critical dialogical relationships between that teacher and school stakeholders (and with me). I am not making causal claims nor am I suggesting that there was a correlation between urban teaching effectiveness and racial identity. Instead, I saw this as an opportunity to inquire into the complexity, and while I make no claims of representativeness with this choice, I felt more comfortable and instinctively believed that this would yield rich and perhaps more complicated conversations that might not otherwise be possible. As a white teacher educator and researcher, I brought particular attention to the ways that whiteness manifests in each of the relationships with the four participants, as well as how I represent those experiences in the project.

In terms of gender, 13 of the 16 eligible participants identified as women and 3 identified as men. I selected three participants who identify as women and one participant who identifies as a man for the project. Similar to race, nationally and locally, there is a disproportionate representation of one group

over others. In the US, 84% of the teaching force is female, while in CPS, 80% of the K-12 teachers are female (Hood, 2009).

Finally, I considered the geographic location of the school. Chicago Public Schools has 480 elementary schools (664 total schools), but there is an incredible range of differences between and among them. Those differences can be structural (schools range from 200 students to nearly 1500 students), programmatic (e.g. neighborhood, charter, magnet, gifted), and curricular (dual-language, arts, international, IB, Montessori). Another important difference among Chicago public schools is the racial identity of the students - Black (40%) and Latinx (45%) students making up 85% of the district, and many schools are racially homogenous; e.g. 70% of all Black students in the Chicago area attend schools that are over 90 percent students of color (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012).

So as I considered possible participants of color and white participants, men and women, I also considered where in Chicago the 16 were hired. The participants I chose were hired at neighborhood schools in CPS, though one of the four was also an AUSL turnaround school. The four neighborhoods represented are Clifton (South Side), Paterson (Southwest side), Ridgewood (near UIC, west of Downtown) and Westfield (Northwest side). Like with my determinations around race and gender, I am not suggesting that I thought there would be causality - that certain types of schools or locations of schools are easier or more challenging spaces for new teachers to build critical dialogical relationships. Instead, I wanted to position myself to be able to inquire into the way that the environment influenced the critical dialogical relationships for new teachers. Having four different Chicago Public School 1 environments to draw from complicated this question.

The Four Teacher Participants⁹

My introductions of the four participants comes from what I've learned about each of them over the time I've known them - for two years as students and my advisees, and for a year as participants and critical dialogue partners.

⁹ The four teacher participants names, their school's name, and the neighborhood name have all been changed to protect their identities.

Claire, 6th/7th/8th Social Studies, 7th math, Jones Elementary, Ridgewood, White Female.

Claire grew up in a suburb outside of Minneapolis in what she has described as a white, upper class community. Claire often names her whiteness and class upbringing as important aspects of her story; her consciousness of her privilege seems to constantly be in dialogue with her commitment to working with students of color in low-income communities. Before UTEP, Claire was involved in a number of social justice experiences, some through religious organizations during her youth. She is particularly proud of her time in South Africa during college studying restorative justice practices developed there, and her current work organizing book drives for incarcerated youth in Chicago.

Prior to UTEP, Claire worked for a year in a CPS high school where she learned to build strong relationships with students of color. Claire's dedication to fulfilling academic requirements and her willingness to both call out and be called out, particularly around race and gender issues led to her being seen by many as a leader in the cohort. In my experience as her clinical advisor, I watched Claire struggle productively with her mentor teacher, who was also a white woman, around issues of race and the zero tolerance policies being enacted at the school.

In Claire's second placement was at Jones, the mostly veteran Black staff and administration were united and public about their commitment to their Black students, even wearing 'Black Lives Matter at Jones' t-shirts on a regular basis. Respected by students and staff, Claire was offered (and took) a job at Jones on the same grade level team as her mentor teacher and other colleagues that she had worked with as a resident.

Olivia, 7th/8th Language Arts and Social Studies, Clifton Elementary, Clifton, Black Female. Olivia grew up on the South Side, with her twin sister; Olivia's father was a truck driver and her mother was a CPS teacher. From K-8th grade, Olivia attended her neighborhood school, Metcalf; throughout this project, she referred back to her experience in CPS as an empowering and caring experience with almost exclusively black women teachers, many of whom she is still in contact with today. This experience was influential in her decision to return to teach Black kids on the South Side, and

her pedagogy and philosophy of education was deeply shaped by the Black women teachers of her childhood.

Prior to UTEP, Olivia worked as a teachers' aid at a CPS charter school, and had seen the way that the lead teachers, many of whom were young and white, had been unable to build classroom community with the kids of color. Early in her time in UTEP, in what was a poignant moment for me and for many of her cohort mates, Olivia spoke out about the importance of order and structure in schools with Black kids and criticized some of her progressive cohort mates for having low expectations.

One of Olivia's residency placements was at a private school in Chicago that serves almost exclusively students of color and is passionately focused on social justice and critical pedagogy. Olivia brought her experiences from working in that school into her first position teaching Black middle schoolers at an AUSL turnaround school in a neighborhood near where she grew up.

Philip, 6th grade math, Powers Elementary, Westfield, White male. Philip grew up in the racially and culturally diverse neighborhood of Westfield in a family with a mother and father who were psychologists, and an older brother who is a psychologist in the US Marine corps. Attending mostly Catholic schools in Chicago. Philip talks a lot about how, as a child, he was made to talk about his feelings. As an adult, Philip has surprised some of his cohort mates and co-workers with his comfort discussing his emotions. Philip will tell you that one of his biggest struggles as a teacher is with some of the more technical aspects, especially organization of materials, and, to some degree, long term planning. Philip sometimes cites his ADD as a reason for his struggles with these parts of the work.

Philip taught for two years in a Catholic school in a low-income Black community in Detroit before coming to UTEP, and his experience building classroom community and his confident, demonstrative presence helped him do well in the program. Sports are important to Philip; he is an athlete and a fan of local sports and being part of a team and being a coach is something that he has said has informed his work as a teacher.

Philip has said that his emotional self-awareness helped him navigate his blind spots and areas for growth about his racial, gender and sexuality consciousness, but he has also said repeatedly that he had a

very hard time grappling with pushes for him to look more critically at his whiteness and his gender privilege. Several times during the project he brought up his ongoing reflections on his identity and its impact on his teaching. His school, Powers, has a mostly white, mostly veteran staff with a mostly newcomer population of color from Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Philip has recounted a number of cases where he has been an ally and advocate for some of his students of color in the face of racist actions by his colleagues.

Tiffany, 5th/6th math, Northeast Elementary, Paterson, Latina/Bi-racial Female. Tiffany grew up in Tuscon, Arizona, the daughter of immigrants; Tiffany's mother was born in Chile and her father was born in Vietnam.. Nearly 30, Tiffany was the oldest of the four participants. Like Philip, Tiffany was a teacher before coming to UTEP, leading a classroom for two years in Arizona. Tiffany is an artist, and she and I have bonded over her appreciation for a punk aesthetic.

Math is Tiffany's favorite subject to teach, and her curiosity and intuitiveness in the subject made her a strong math teacher and curriculum writer as a resident. She brought enthusiasm for the subject to her students at Northeast, which was particularly important for her 6th graders, who apparently had had a couple of years of math teachers quit mid-year. Tiffany's passion for social justice and challenging the status quo is a big part of her teaching. Tiffany's demeanor is on the quieter side and she sometimes seems more comfortable on the edges than in the center of group experiences.

Tiffany was having - what I perceived to be - a very solid first year of teaching when things got too intense for her and she checked herself into the hospital one Saturday in January. She spent several weeks in an outpatient program before happily returning to her classroom, re-invigorated and ready to get back to her kids. After returning to teaching for a few weeks and seeming to have a fine relationship with administration, she was informed that her principal had begun the formal process of having her removed from her position for allegedly failing to file the correct paperwork. Tiffany fought, and is still fighting, this claim with the support of the Chicago Teachers Union, but CPS ruled with the Principal, and Tiffany's position was terminated in April.

My Positionality as a Researcher

Social Location

It's important to locate myself in the research on a number of levels, beginning with my acknowledgement of the various aspects of my identity as a white cisgender heterosexual able-bodied male, all of which have afforded me a great deal of privilege in society, in the academy, as a researcher, and as a Critical Dialogue Partner with my former students/ teacher participants. I grew up comfortably in a working/middle class family; my dad worked two jobs to help make ends meet, but his career as an urban high school social studies teacher and my mom's work in the office of a local elementary school after raising me and my two younger brothers into our teen years meant I didn't know economic struggle as a kid. I attended public schools K-12 in a well-funded racially integrated suburban district, attended private college with some debt, and have been an employed urban educator since graduation, so I've never had to struggle economically in ways that I saw my students struggle when I was a teacher.

From this location, I have always operated from a position of race and class privilege; as a public school teacher and now teacher educator, my class positionality along with my race means I operate from an outsider position as a researcher and teacher educator when working with urban schools and communities serving people of color most often in low socioeconomic status. Now in my early 40s, I recognize the way that I am increasingly an outsider to youth culture, as well, which has an impact on my work in schools and communities but also with many of my teacher education students.

Consciousness about my identity and the way it is both an asset and a limitation in relational educational work in urban schools is not new, and it is not finished. Since my first day as a classroom teacher 22 years ago at Crossroads and through my work at UChicagoUTEP, I have been actively engaged in self-examination through dialogue about the way my identity plays out in my work.

UTEP Instructor

I acknowledge that even though the participants were no longer formally attached to the program, they may have felt coerced to participate in this study because of their desire to still receive support from their teacher education program. Their contributions to the dialogue, in terms of how they represented

their experiences as first year teachers, may have reflected more what they think I wanted to hear, as a representative of the program.

Their responses also may have reflected their desire to be represented in this project in a positive light. It's possible the participants were concerned with being perceived as unsuccessful, and this may be a limit to the design of critical dialogical relationships with a teacher educator they already know. To counter this possibility, I worked actively to name this potential bias in my dialogues with the participants, and attempted to establish a collaborative and non-evaluative process.

CPS Researcher

The original, proposed design of the project was broader in scope than the one represented in this dissertation. I had intended to collect several pieces of data from inside the classrooms and schools of the participants, including observations of the participants teaching and also engaging with school stakeholders (fellow teachers, families, administrators), as well as follow up interviews with some of those members of the participants' school communities. First, my committee cautioned me that my scope was likely too broad. Almost simultaneously, the CPS Research Review Board rejected my original design. Their primary rationale for rejecting it was articulated as follows:

“The committee has determined that there is a conflict of interest in this research study. Our guidelines prohibit research studies on individuals known to the researcher and given your relationship with the research subjects and with the UTEP program, the committee has determined that this presents a conflict.” (CPS RRB Notification)

In order to both heed the advice of my committee and comply with the RRB - an important gatekeeper to research in CPS schools - I changed the design of my project at the outset to concentrate my data collection on the Critical Dialogue data, exclusively. Therefore, from the very start of this project, the Critical Dialogues make up the entirety of the data for this dissertation.

In reflection, I have come to see the narrowing of the potential data to only the Critical Dialogues as a surprising and fortunate outcome. Initially frustrated by CPS RRB's myopic (in my opinion) perspective on education research, I was concerned that not including observation data from inside classrooms and schools would seriously hinder the scope and validity of my project. But in the end, the

focus on Critical Dialogues has meant that the data and conclusions of this project reflect a more dialogic, collaborative process with the participants. Rather than stepping back and analyzing the observation data I would have collected *about* the participants and writing about it here (without their voices included), I brought my observations of their classroom practice to the Critical Dialogues *and asked the participants to talk with me about what we'd experienced together* (me, as observer, and the participant, as teacher). This shift ended up centering their voices and perspectives much more than I had (somehow, negligently) planned in my original design. It has changed the entire project altogether, including my recommendations to the field.

It's possible that CPS' perspective on education research is based in the critiques of Practitioner Inquiry, the central methodology of this project, perhaps echoing the critique (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006) that practitioners lack the training and distance to carry out a study on one's practice, or the critique that the knowledge generated by the project isn't based on the "conventions, strategies, and epistemic warrants associated with formal knowledge" (p.512). I believe my knowledge of the teacher participants - and their knowledge of me - *enhances* the research in this project, strengthened our Critical Dialogues, and led to a deepening of our critical consciousness and an improvement in the quality and the criticality of their teaching and my teacher education practice. In the end, I disagree with CPS' stance and agree with Schön (1983) that Practitioner inquiry is contributing to a different body of knowledge, a "new epistemology of practice."

UTEP Induction Coach

As described above in the Participant Selection process, I agreed to be the UTEP Induction Coach to each of the participants. Induction Coach is one of several roles I play - and have played - in the UTEP program. The assignment of an Induction coach to a newly graduated UTEP teacher takes place each August, once most have found jobs and begin to plan for their first year of teaching. As described above in Participant Selection, I waited until the 16 members of Cohort 11 that had agreed to participate in the project were hired in a CPS school before determining who the participants would be and then I began working with each of them as their Induction Coach.

Because the CPS RRB rejection and subsequent project re-design (described above) came before the school year officially began, I formally separated my roles as UIC researcher and UTEP induction coach, and made that separation clear to both my committee and also to the four teacher participants. As Induction coach for each of the four participants throughout their first year of teaching, I carried out typical induction practices to support the technical practice aspects of their teaching, including conducting in-classroom observations, meeting during prep period or before or after school to co-plan units, collaboratively assessing student work, and supporting their decision making around other first year teacher dilemmas.

Serving as the in-classroom Induction Coach role deeply enhanced my ability to comprehend the descriptions the participants brought to the Critical Dialogues, which I believe strengthened the Critical Dialogical Partnerships, overall. I was in their classroom regularly - sometimes 2 or 3 times a month - which allowed me the opportunity to get to know students and other members of their school community that came up in the Critical Dialogues outside of school. It also afforded me the opportunity to have professional knowledge of the curriculum and environmental aspects of the first year of the teacher participants that otherwise would have been only told or described through the participant. At the same time, this role likely influenced my role as researcher, possibly limiting in ways that I may not be fully aware.

Critical Dialogue Methods

The data of this dissertation project consisted of five Critical Dialogues that took place between me and each of the four teacher participants (twenty in total) across the school year of CPS in 2015-16. One Critical Dialogue per participant (four in total) took place every two months of the ten-month school year, first in October, 2015, and then again in December, 2015, and February, April, and June, 2016. Generally speaking, the monthly cluster of Critical Dialogues occurred within a week to ten days of one another within a given month, based on my ability to schedule them with each of the four teacher participants.

TABLE I: DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND TIMELINE

| Dialogue | Timeframe | Problem Posing Prompt (within dialogues) | Data Analysis Focus (between dialogues) | Major Themes |
|-----------------|------------------|---|---|--|
| 1 | October | Participant self-assessment of critical dialogue success in their schools (See Table II and III) | Individual participant themes (see Table VII) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed critical curriculum opportunities • Lack of support from administrators |
| 2 | December | Local newsworthy events related to education and schooling | Cross participant theme (see Table VIII) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Emotional critical care • Critical Dialogic stance toward school community members • Missed curricular opportunities |
| 3 | February | Themes selected by participant that they wished to discuss from previous dialogue | Cross participant theme; some individual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership or lack of membership in the school community. • Challenges engaging with parents and community members |
| 4 | April | Themes selected by participant that they wished to discuss from previous dialogue | Cross school community –member (e.g. critical dialogue ‘in the classroom’) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual participant stories within the school community member categories (Classroom, Schoolhouse, etc) |
| 5 | June | Reflection on the Critical Dialogue Praxis across the year. | Cross school community –member (e.g. critical dialogue ‘in the classroom’) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections on the Critical Dialogue Praxis • Individual participant stories within the school community member categories (Classroom, Schoolhouse) |

In my description of the design of the project, I was explicit about the importance of Critical Dialogues taking place outside of both the teacher participant’s school and classroom, as well as the university of their teacher education program. Under the assumption that a third space would enhance each teacher participant’s ability to be critically reflective, I encouraged each participant to choose a

meeting spot where they felt comfortable and would look forward to dialoguing. As a result, the meeting sites were varied, with only one teacher participant (Philip) choosing the same spot for all five of our Critical Dialogues. There is some consistency in the sites; all twenty Critical Dialogues took place in either a coffee shop or a bar. Both types of sites were well suited for dialogue between adults.

Each Critical Dialogue was recorded on my phone using a voice-recording app, and then was transcribed shortly after completion. The Dialogues usually lasted somewhere between 90 minutes and two hours. In more cases than not, I stopped the dialogues at the two hour mark, mostly for research purposes, e.g. worrying I'd have too much data, the labor of transcribing, etc.

Pedagogy of the Critical Dialogues

The dialogic pedagogy I used in the Critical Dialogue Partnerships was drawn from my previous use of dialogue as a classroom teacher, teacher educator, and doctoral student. I used an intentionally-loose framework for facilitating the dialogue, which I adjusted across the year based on the experience of each dialogue and my critical reflection afterwards.

This loose framework of dialogic pedagogy with new teachers is deeply influenced by Paulo Freire's conception of dialogic pedagogy (1970, 1973).. The Critical Dialogues were built around the critical examination of a mutually agreed upon cognizable object; in this project's case that cognizable object was the teacher participants teaching practice. Knowing that praxis calls for critical reflection on the cognizable object, I intentionally centered critical examination and reflection on the teacher participants first year teaching experiences. I established a norm between us that the knowledge and experience of both the participant and the facilitator were enriching funds that helped shape the construction of new knowledge.

Additionally, I used a 'problem posing' approach (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). Problem posing "breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education" (Freire, 1970; p.80) and positions the teacher and student in a horizontal relationship as collaborating inquirers. Shor (1992) has described his process for using problem-posing in a classroom setting as "back-loading" where the expertise of the teacher is intentionally moved to the end of a dialogue, as opposed to the traditional start of a dialogue. I

used this approach based on what I was hearing as I actively listened to the teacher participant's reflection. Often this trying to move the dialogue to a more critical place, asking both of us to consider the root causes of the problem. Other times, I came to the Critical Dialogue with a problem in mind, based on the patterns and generative themes I'd identified during my Between Dialogue analysis of the transcripts.

Though it began as a loose, organic framework the dialogues in this study did end up taking on a relatively consistent form. However, I want to be clear that these steps were not specifically named or carried out in a formal, deliberate manner at the start of the study. After asking the participants in June about the process and then conducting my own analysis of the Critical Dialogue transcripts, I can now see that the typical Critical Dialogue entailed five phases (more discussion of this in Chapter 7).— an Open Dialogue, naming and validating the success of the teacher participants, critical sense-making, stretching the participants' critical practice, and then committing to attainable and aspirational next steps. A more-detailed explanation of these five phases of the Critical Dialogue Praxis is articulated in Chapter 7.

Critical Dialogue Starters

For three of the five dialogues (October, December, and June) I used a 'Critical Dialogue Prompt' or "Starter;"¹⁰ My rationale for bringing a 'starter' to the October Critical Dialogue was informed by my experience with dialogic pedagogy where students (or teachers – whomever is in the "student" role of a teacher/student dynamic) can sometimes revert to a dominated role typical of a banking method of education, listening and expecting the teacher in the dynamic to teach. I was concerned that expecting the teacher participants – after a long day of teaching - to immediately move into a critically reflective dialogic position was unrealistic and potentially unrealistic, so I sought to ensure that we had something prepared to get the dialogue going. I also brought prompts because I had noticed in my induction coaching experience that critically reflective dialogues can meander away from critical analysis. I

¹⁰ "Prompt" and "starter" are curriculum terms that the teacher participants are familiar with and are common tools teachers in CPS classrooms are often expected to use at the opening of a class period.

believed that having a “Starter” would give me a concrete tool to return to if there was a struggle to maintain a focus,.

The October Starter had two distinct pieces. The first asked the teacher to evaluate the frequency, quality, and criticality of any dialogues (existent/nonexistent) they’d had up until that point with the various members of their school community. Table II¹¹ shows the first of six boxes listing out each of the membership groups of the school community.

TABLE II: OCTOBER DIALOGUE STARTER PART 1: DIALOGUE SELF-ASSESSMENT

| Stakeholder | In Dialogue with? | If unidirectional, which way? | If ‘in dialogue with,’ is it critical? |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| Students | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder Stakeholder You You Stakeholder | Always Sometimes Rarely Never |

The second part of the October Starter (Table III) lists out Duncan-Andrade’s “Five Pillars of Effective Practice” (2007) – a framework for critical urban teachers that the participants had read with me in their coursework at UTEP. The prompt asked the teacher participants to determine to what degree they felt they were meeting those pillars, using a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from Never to Always. The participants were able to recall this framework, and were able to then consider themselves and their work in light of those ideas. This is an example of how our shared knowledge and experience served as a critical base for our Dialogue, giving us a shorthand for critical analysis that did not require elaboration.

¹¹ On the original prompt (see Appendix A) there are arrows in the “if uni-directional” box. The other members of the school community include Parents, Colleagues, Administrators, Staff Members, Community Members, and Curriculum.

TABLE III: OCTOBER DIALOGUE STARTER, PART 2: THE FIVE PILLARS

| At the core of my practice this month | Never | Not often | Sometimes | Much of the time | Always |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|------------------|--------|
| Critically Conscious Purpose | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Duty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Preparation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Socratic Sensibility | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Trust | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

This prompt resembles a self-efficacy measurement tool; however, I never planned to use the qualitative data longitudinally. The purpose of the starters, as previously stated, was to generate dialogue and prioritize critical analysis. However, I recognize that this decision might be considered a missed opportunity or limitation of this study. It is worth considering if these self-assessment measurement tools would have a place in future research, if repeated frequently across a year or set of years and analyzed, quantitatively.

The December Starter (Table IV) lists, across the top of the tool, a series of questions about the extent to which various local and national events were named and discussed in their school communities. The range of questions asks the participant to locate themselves in these possible conversations, and evaluate whether or not they had some role in encouraging critical dialogue about any of the various topics.

TABLE IV: DECEMBER DIALOGUE STARTER: CRITICAL TOPICS TABLE

| | Uttered / over heard in your classroom in any way, planned or unplanned? | Had intentions or plans to talk about this with students? | Plans led to critical dialogues with students? | | Uttered/ overheard in your school amongst other stakeholders? (parents, fellow staff, admin, community) | Had intentions or plans to talk about this with school stakeholders parents, fellow staff, admin, community) | Plans led to a critical dialogue with a stakeholder |
|---------------------|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| Dyett Hunger Strike | | | | | | | |

Down the y-axis of the December Dialogue Starter is a list of school-related or societal issues or events that occurred in the few weeks between the start of school, September 2015 and the dialogues held in December 2015. This list is staggering to me still as I write this - so many important events rippled through the classrooms of these participants in their very first year of teaching

TABLE V: DECEMBER DIALOGUE STARTER: CRITICAL TOPICS LIST

- Dyett Hunger Strike
- (not Chicago) Assault At Spring Valley High (girl dragged out of classroom by cop)
- 9 year old Tyshaun Lee killed in Auburn Clifton
- CTU November 2015 rally, possible strike looms, 5,000 teachers possibly cut
- Protests after LaQuan McDonald video is released; arrest of Johnae Strong (UTEP teacher) and Malcolm London (author on my UTEP syllabus)
- Organizing and the release / charges dropped, Malcolm London
- The Black Friday shutdown of Michigan Ave shopping
- (again, not Chicago, but, still) - Planned Parenthood attack by white supremacist terrorist.
- The closing of UChicago on 11/30/15 due to online gun threat.
- Shootings in San Bernadino, CA
- Donald Trump

After the December Critical Dialogues, I determined that the Starters were no longer necessary for engaging the in critical reflection about their own practice, and chose not to use them for either the February or April Dialogues. In place of the Starter, I sent each participant a copy of the transcript of the previous dialogue ahead of time, and asked them to read it and look for themes they wanted to discuss. This shift in pedagogy first occurred to me as I heard participants reference topics from the October dialogue during the December dialogue; I connected this observation to an idea that one of my committee members (Bill Ayers) had raised during the Dissertation Proposal defense; Bill asked what might happen if I shared the words of the teacher participants back to them after I'd read and analyzed them, myself. Prior to both the February and April dialogues, each participant received a copy of their previous dialogue transcript and was invited to read it and pick out any themes they noticed and wanted to discuss.

I did not use this practice for the June Dialogue, instead returning to the use of prompts, sharing a a short starter for the June Critical Dialogue (Table VI) to help encourage a different type of reflection for

the participants – one oriented back onto the critical dialogue process that we’d engaged in together throughout the year and study.

TABLE VI: JUNE DIALOGUE STARTER – REFLECTION ON THE CRITICAL DIALOGUE PRAXIS CYCLE

Final Critical Dialogue - #5

Reflection on the teacher’s year, reflection on a year of critical dialogue with a teacher educator.

- What actions came as a result of having critical dialogical partnership with me this year? Did it help you to put theory into practice? What did having these critical dialogues teach us, reveal, show, illuminate is happening in schooling right now? What does it tell us about the state of schooling in Chicago, where we are at with social justice education? About the level of dialogue in schools, the stakeholders.

Data Analysis

The twenty critical dialogues between me and the four teacher participants during their first year of teaching in CPS are the sole source of data in this study. My analysis of that data falls into two categories that match the dichotomized research questions that drove this project; the first level of data analysis considered the attempts at critical dialogue between the teacher participant and the various members of their school community, as reported and introduced by the teacher participants and then entered into a sense-making dialogue between the teacher participant and myself. In my analysis of this data, I found a number of themes; in the end, I chose three inter-connected layers within the data that I then used as organizing principles and have become the frames of three of the four findings chapters - Critical Dialogue “In the Classroom,” “In the Schoolhouse” and “With/In the Community.”

The second set of data, culled from the same twenty dialogues, is an analysis of the dialogues, themselves. This included any discussion between the participant and myself about the process of our dialogue that came up during the first four Critical Dialogues, but a good deal of the data for this second set came from the specific reflection we engaged in during our fifth dialogue (described above). My analysis of this data is articulated in Chapter 7, “Critical Dialogue Partnerships.”

My process for data analysis followed a predictable pattern across the year; once all four Critical Dialogues were completed in that particular month (e.g. October), I spent the next month (e.g. November) analyzing the transcripts of the dialogues with these two sets of analysis lenses. I used analytic memos to capture my analysis and referred back to each of these when I did my final analysis of the data after the project was complete.

In my analysis of the process, I went through each transcript looking for any examples of moments where the two of us engaged in some sort of explicit conversation about the process itself. Throughout the first four Critical Dialogues, this often showed up unexpectedly, and without prompting, often in conversation about some other topic. In the June Critical Dialogue, I intentionally prompted for specific reflection on the process. Across the year, I sorted any data about the process into themes (e.g. an early theme was the importance of the third space context for our Critical Dialogues), keeping track of that data in analytic memos dedicated to analysis of the process. I expand on these themes in Chapter 7.

In terms of the teacher participants practice in their school communities, specifically their critical reflections on their attempts to engage in critical and dialogic teaching and relationship building, it took some time for themes to emerge. I first considered the stories of each individual, looking for patterns of how each teacher participant was making sense of their experience engaging the members of their school community in critical dialogue. I highlighted text examples and then coded them within the dialogue transcript, and then named themes in Analytic Memo 1 and 2 under the name of the participant. Table VII is an example of this from Analytic Memo 2:

TABLE VII. PARTICIPANT-SPECIFIC THEMES

| Participant | Possible emerging themes |
|-------------|---|
| Tiffany | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible critical dialogue with curriculum - math projects (outside the assigned curriculum) • Already expressing frustration with Administration, feeling burnt out |
| Philip | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization, procedures are an impediment to being critical, dialogical. • Feelings Log - emerging critical curriculum idea. Social Justice? |

| | |
|--------|---|
| Olivia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging partnership with AUSL-trained grade level colleague (stakeholder) Olivia trying to learn more about community members, Clifton, parents. |
| Claire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public support of Claire by principal having positive effect, critical dialogue (stakeholder) Her math curriculum (scripted) in contrast to her SS curriculum (critical, self-created) |

After the December Dialogue, I began to analyze themes *across participants*, constructing themes that captured the common or unique experiences among the four teacher participants as they tried to engage the members of their school community in critical dialogue. I first highlighted these themes in a different color from the individual themes (described above). If the theme was present for at least two of the participants, I recorded those in the Analytic memo under the name of the Theme, itself, and then listed the participants it applied to and any helpful additional info in a second column. An example, from Analytic Memo #4 , is captured in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII. ACROSS PARTICIPANT THEMES

| Theme - across participants | Participants in this theme |
|--|--|
| <p>Social emotional - critical? - care for new urban teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is providing it? For some participants, coming from in-school stakeholders, for at least Claire, coming from parent/guardians, too. Is this part of what critical dialogue with me / TE can provide? | <p>Claire - from many stakeholders Philip - some, but less than Claire, same range. Tiffany - some from grade level team, Elena. None from admin. Olivia - almost no support from in-school stakeholders, not much from other places.</p> |
| <p>Notion of a critical dialogic ‘stance’ toward stakeholders. A readiness to engage, even if stakeholders aren’t presenting same readiness.</p> | <p>Claire - toward community members, parents/guardians Philip - toward curriculum, spontaneous interruptions by kids with critical questions Tiffany - Admin who are trying to push her out Olivia - toward curriculum, trying to find cracks in the scripted curriculum.</p> |

In July, 2016, with all transcriptions completed, I engaged in a narrative analysis of each individual teacher participant’s reflection on their first year of teaching, as captured in their five critical

dialogues with me. I then read through that single-participant document, from start to finish. During this process, I looked for stories that were strong examples of any of the three themes and cut and pasted those large chunks of dialogue into story documents for each individual participant (e.g. “Tiffany’s Individual stories”).

With these three perspectives on my data - month-by-month participant specific themes, month-by-month across participant themes, and year-long individual themes/stories, I determined that the most powerful organizing principle for analysis was viewing the critical dialogue of the four participants through the three lenses of “In the Classroom,” “In the Schoolhouse” and “With/in the Community.”

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the methodology I used in this dissertation project dedicated to inquiring into two connected but separate phenomenon - the experience of the teacher participants attempting to engage the members of their school community in critical dialogue, and the experience of the process of the teacher participants and myself engaging in repeated Critical Dialogue across their first year, what I call the Critical Dialogue Partnerships. These phenomenon share theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings, but they are also distinct. The first phenomenon - captured in the first three findings under three nested contextual themes - involves the two dialoguers making sense of one persons’ experience with others who are not present. The second phenomenon involves the two dialoguers making sense of their mutual experience in a process. Therefore, I acknowledge that these categorizations, in some ways, are artificial. They are helpful in the reporting of the experience of the teacher participants and the mutual process we shared together.

CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction - Curricular Standpoint and Critical Care

My analysis of the Critical Dialogues with the four teacher participants in their first year of teaching revealed a rich set of data that spoke to how they engaged in critical and dialogic teaching and relationship building with the various members of the school community. My summary of that analysis begins at the classroom level, with some examples of how they reported trying to engage their students. I acknowledge that beginning with a focus on the classroom at any given moment has the potential to diminish or neglect the intersecting and overlapping structural and relational forces in and around any given classroom, urban or other. What goes on inside a classroom cannot truly be separated from the influence of forces from outside of the classroom.

However, when we consider the many interactions the teacher participants – as new teachers - had with the various members of their school community, beginning with a focus *in the classroom* makes sense. The classroom and the students are at the heart of a new teacher's experience - nearly all of the 20 critical dialogues began with talk about kids¹² in the classroom - the joys, the struggles, the hilarity, the tragedy. Walk up to any group of teachers talking - in the hallway, in a classroom on a prep, at the bar after school – and the topic of conversation is probably about what went on inside the classroom, most often about the 'kids.' So while I recognize that there are limitations to an analysis focused on spaces - the classroom, the schoolhouse, the community - this framing helped me make sense of the data and present it in a coherent manner.

First, in a section I call "Curricular Standpoint," I examine the ways in which the teacher participants were able to critically interpret and influence the curricular expectations they encountered, specifically in terms of what they felt they were expected to teach; I refer to this as "the expected

¹² Throughout this project, the use of the term 'kids' refers to the adolescent, middle-school age students of the four teacher participants. I've decided to use the term "kids" primarily because that is the term that the teacher participants use most frequently, often affectionately, to refer to the students in their classrooms. However, I acknowledge that "kids" is also a term that I use most frequently to describe the adolescent, middle-school students that I taught and also the term that I use most frequently in my teacher education classes in UTEP. In the literature, students are sometimes referred to as "youth," but it has been my experience that "youth" is often referring specifically to high-school age students.

curriculum.” The teacher participants and I each considered some essential questions about the expected curriculum in our Critical Dialogic Partnerships (e.g., “In what ways is the expected curriculum critical?” “How accessible and relevant or sustaining is the expected curriculum to the culture and lived experiences of my students?” “How much room do I have to influence the expected curriculum, to make it more critical?” “Is dialogue a practice that is encouraged and supported in my school - by fellow teachers, administrators, families, students?”).

Next, in a section I call “Dialogic Critical Care” I focus on the relationship aspects of the classroom teaching of the teacher participants. I apply a Critical Care lens to my discussion of these stories, in particular to what is commonly referred to as “Classroom Management.” Once again, the teacher participants and I considered essential questions about the Critical Care *In their Classroom*, including “What was my approach to relationship building with my students from the first day meeting them?” “What was my role in creating and maintaining a safe and caring classroom community, and how did I respond when my classroom community felt unsafe or harmful?” “How did I understand and negotiate the power inside my first classroom?”

Finally, I spotlight two stories of moments when the teacher participants integrated curricular standpoint and dialogic critical care approaches. These integrated moments spotlight the ways that a Critical Dialogic Stance – toward formal instruction and toward relational care for students – can become habits of mind, seamlessly enacted in prepared moments, but also in unexpected impromptu opportunities.

Curricular Standpoint in the Classroom

I use Au’s (2012) Curricular Standpoint to frame the type of prepared, intentional curriculum that the teacher participants hoped to enact in their classrooms as first year teachers. Only one participant, Claire, entered a school community where administrators, fellow teachers, and families had a vision of teaching and learning that was remotely similar to ‘curricular standpoint.’ I frame her story as one of “Supported Critical Teaching.” Another participant, Olivia, entered a school community that required adherence to a scripted curriculum focused heavily on test preparation, with a pedagogy that in many

ways resembled a banking approach to education (Freire, 1970). Olivia was keenly aware of the clash between her vision of critical teaching and what (and how) she was expected to teach; her story, then, is one of “Confronting a Packaged and Mandated Curriculum.” The expected curriculum at Tiffany and Philip’s schools fell somewhere between these two extremes - hardly conscious of, let alone promoting of, a curricular standpoint, but at the same time, not scrutinized or mandated enough to be characterized as a banking approach. With their two stories, I nod to Ayers’ (2001) notion of “Working in the Gap,” that “often elusive and sometimes enormous space between what is and what could be” (p. 137).

Claire: Supported Critical Teaching

Many of the administration and fellow teachers at Claire’s school, Jones Elementary, engaged in a critically conscious approach that was similar to the approach that UTEP used to prepare teachers. Specifically, Jones encouraged teachers to create and teach a pedagogy that centered the lives, experiences, and issues related to their Black students. Topics like the gentrification and disinvestment in the community are part of the shared understanding in the school community, which sits in a lucrative central location close to downtown. Jones has been a Level 3 school - CPS’ lowest rating - for 9 years; its student population is 96% low income with a 25% mobility rate.

Claire: (many of the Jones kids come from) The ABLA Homes. Then most people live there have lived there or have grandparents who live there. There's some connection to that neighborhood. We have some kids whose parents went to Jones, so that's-

Bill: That legacy.

Claire: Then there's a small pocket that spent time at the Civic, the Mission down Roosevelt.

Bill: What is that?

Claire: It's a homeless shelter. They sometimes will stay at Jones, because that's one of the closest. It's not the closest. I believe South is the closest, but for a variety of reasons they come to Jones instead.

The narrative for urban schools painted as ‘failing’ and serving marginalized populations often means a required, mandated curriculum focused almost exclusively on the high stakes, standardized subjects to be tested (mathematics and literacy) and a pedagogical focus that is teacher-centered and

transactional (Au, 2007; Moe, 2003). Furthermore, this “curricular and pedagogic squeeze” (Au, 2016) can mean the continued erasure of race and culturally relevant teaching (Darder & Torres, 2004; Au, 2016). But Jones’s administration and teachers have rejected a narrowing of the curriculum; with encouragement from her administration and grade level partners, Claire began right away trying to build and develop her students’ critical consciousness. Part of this process began with the critical examination of traditional texts, helping students learn to look at official curriculum with a critical lens:

Because I want them to be thinkers and I want them to be critical. And so I’m trying to give them those skills to see that it’s ok to question history. We used the textbook for the first time last week. And we were looking at the textbook, and I was like, OK, so what about this textbook do you think is really accurate, and what is the textbook leaving out? And I think... they were like, wait, what do you mean what is the textbook leaving out? And I was like, only so much can fit in. What’s not in this?

It also meant introducing her students to critical authors who raised questions about justice and inequality and who spoke from a common racial identity:

[With] 7th and 8th grade I’m trying. I started giving a couple of the kids (Carter G. Woodson’s) The Miseducation of the Negro just to kinda test to see where they were and whether or not they were understanding it. And everyone wanted one and started getting into it. So I think that once we’re doing something that’s a little bit more explicit in the ways that it seems to be applicable, I’m hoping that 7th and 8th grade will be much more critical.

Claire designed her curriculum to be more critical and dialogic by helping kids inquire into the conditions of their own experience, taking current and local events - some that students were intensely aware of, some that she introduced to them - and linking them to the historical events that they were studying. These steps helped students to better understand the social studies concept being taught, but also understand the events themselves:

We're looking at this video about the Freedom Riders and I was like, "Do you think this video is a primary source or a secondary source?" We were talking about that and as we were talking I was like, "Okay, so a newspaper article with an interview with a mother of Laquan McDonald¹³, is that a primary source or a secondary source?" And trying different things that we've looked at or

¹³ On October 20, 2014, Laquan McDonald, a 17 year old Black male was shot 16 times and killed by Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke. Video of the murder was recorded, but suppressed, and did not surface until November, 2015; charges were not brought until a judge ordered the video’s release. In the weeks following the video’s release, mass demonstrations took place in Chicago.

done and still like teaching those skills in primary and secondary sources but trying to make it relevant, in a way that's not always taught.

We actually watched a video of the protests (at the University of Missouri¹⁴) in class and then compared it to the freedom rides. The kids were like, "They're fighting for the same stuff but it's been like 40 years." I was like, "Yeah." We watched a documentary on the Freedom Riders and then we watched what happened, there was like a video and we read the list of demands from the kids at the University of Missouri and talked about them in Social Studies.

Though Claire had a good deal of support to create her own curriculum, she was not without mandates, free to do whatever she wanted. Social Studies is not (as of this writing) a tested subject in CPS, but she faced a big challenge preparing her 8th graders for the Illinois-mandated Constitution test:

So we looked at the picture of the setting of the Constitution and I'm like, what do you see? That was one of the days the 8th graders were really, really engaged.

They were like, I don't know, I see a bunch of men. And I was like, what kind of men? And they just thought it was so funny that I was like, "Look, these are a bunch of old, stinky, rich, white men." And they were like "What?" (and I replied) "I mean, that's what they are."

Then I asked them who was missing. And so they started naming a bunch of races. And then it took them a really long time to realize that there were no women in the picture. And so, like that was a good moment. So we kept going back to, so who was the Constitution written by? Cause then we were reading the actual text, and they were like what is this 3/5 thing? And I was like, yeah, let's talk about that, cause that's messed up.

Yeah. And so, I have a plan for Monday how we're gonna talk about Columbus Day and what connections we can then draw to the Constitution with 7th and 8th. One of the questions is, "Describe a supreme court case that you know and tell like how it affected the people's rights?" Every kid in the class had a project on that so they all have one that they researched in depth theoretically.

In these examples, we see that Claire was able to engage in a Critical Dialogue, first with her curriculum, as she planned and created tasks, and then once again with her kids in class. By posing critical questions like "What do you see" and "Who is missing" she is beginning to cultivate a critical framework for kids - a skillset that will go beyond her classroom. By linking current stories of Black oppression and liberation - Laquan McDonald, the students at the University of Missouri - to historical examples of Black liberation and oppression - Freedom Riders, Constitutional Convention - she's helping

¹⁴ In the Fall of 2015, a number of protests were organized under the name "Concerned Student 1950" which referred to the first year the University of Missouri admitted Black students. The protests were in response to a number of racist acts committed by white students dating back to 2010. The student body president, Jonathan Butler, went on a hunger strike, black players on the Missouri Football team threatened to strike, and eventually the College President resigned.

students see the historicity of knowledge. Her ability to integrate gender into the Constitution dialogue, I think, demonstrates a Critical Race understanding of intersectionality that centers race but links it to other forms of oppression based on social location (e.g. Crenshaw, 1991). As a White Woman, she is resisting the historical tendency of other white feminists who prioritize gender oppression over racial oppression (e.g. hooks, 2000). Later in the year, we dialogued about what she was learning about her approach to curriculum design.

Claire: Yeah. I think in the beginning I was like, "I'm going to be one of those people, who 10 years in I'm going to have it all figured out. I'm going to have all the curriculum set in the summer. I'm going to know exactly where I'm going," and I'm just realizing that that's not what actually makes good planning and good curriculum because I was able to have a really great conversation with kids about Beyonce's performance at the Super Bowl that fit perfectly into our unit but didn't actually ... I never would have planned it.

I was thinking about that in the same way that the last time we talked I had talked to you about weaving in what was going on with the University of Missouri. How like you can't actually plan for things that are happening in real life and yet those are some of the most meaningful things. These kids are researching the stuff on personal expression and here we go Beyonce just dropped this video and then performed it at the Super Bowl and then had all this backlash and the police are saying that they're not going to protect her at her concerts. Then Kendrick Lamar performs at the Grammy's In chains and how is he expressing himself through music and what is the story that he's telling and how does that mesh with the conversation that's happening about these award shows being so white all the time.

Bill: So what's the lesson there? You started by saying I've gotten more comfortable with not being perfect essentially. You're also saying something about the need for planning to be flexible and responsive to the very relevant things that are happening day to day that you can't plan for, so what's ...

Claire: I think it's all a part of the same vein around this idea that teaching and learning is a process that has to exist in something outside of a written curriculum or a textbook. It actually has to do with the real world context and that's what makes learning meaningful and we can't plan for those things. It doesn't mean that planning isn't important but if we get so stuck on 'this is the plan that I'm going to have and this is how it's going to be meaningful' we're missing the larger picture of what's actually going on in the world.

This exchange reflects Claire's emerging understanding of curricular standpoint - that it requires an attunement to current context as it is happening and how it relates to history, inviting her students

simultaneously to *read the word and the world* (Freire, 1970). Contemporary scholars might call this an example of reality pedagogy “making the local experiences of the student visible” (Emdin, 2016, p. 27).

As we saw previously, Claire tied the expected curriculum of the Constitution Test to other historical events that intersect with the local experience of the students (Columbus Day, a holiday from school) and other contemporary local experiences of the students (Missouri, Laquan McDonald protests). In this example, Claire uses popular and likely well-known examples (Beyonce’s half-time performance, Kendrick Lamar) to help ground the concepts in her expected IB¹⁵ unit on personal expression

Olivia: Confronting a Mandated & Packaged Curriculum

The AUSL turnaround school - Clifton Elementary - where Olivia taught Language Arts and Social Studies had a very different philosophy than Jones. Clifton administrators - and their AUSL bosses - required strict adherence to the EngageAUSL curriculum, a version of the (now popular) EngageNY¹⁶ curriculum purchased and specifically tailored for AUSL schools in Chicago. Any deviation from this curriculum that was noticed by Olivia’s Principal or her AUSL-assigned instructional coach was considered insubordinate, despite the fact that Olivia could tell right away that the curriculum was inaccessible and not relatable for many of her students:

And we didn't finish it just because the EngageAUSL model just assumes all kids are going to like it. It has little blurbs in the side of the lesson plans that say, "All right. For these kids, these struggling readers do this," but it doesn't really address the needs of all students, especially when there's thirty-six of them, and the diverse learners are in my room.

I just feel like the text is so boring to them. They try to be, "Okay, let's do this. Read this" rigorous, rigorous.. It's all about rigor. It's all about rigor, , but if they don't understand it, it's pointless.....It's like reading a different language. I just wish there were texts that were more interesting.

¹⁵ From the CPS website: The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a nonprofit educational foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. Founded in 1968, IB works with over 3,700 schools in 147 countries to develop and offer four challenging programs to more than 1.1 million students. The curriculum of IB programs focuses on international perspectives of learning and teaching, while insisting that students fully explore their home culture and language. The core components of IB programs encourage students to participate in creative and service-oriented activities, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of reflection on a personal and academic level.

¹⁶ EngageNY is a Common Core aligned curriculum created by New York State Board of Regents, made available to schools for free, and widely adopted across the US in the last 3 years.

When Olivia tried to supplement and balance this mandated, whole class curriculum with some opportunities for independent practice and choice - moves that critical teachers can make to offset the transactional banking pedagogy a curricula like this relies on - she found little space.

Bill: Have you tried to do independent reading?

Olivia: We did in the beginning, and they (her students) like independent reading, but I haven't done it in awhile just because it's one of those things where it's going to come after everything else. We have to do Engage..., and now there's NWEA prep, so it's always going to be an afterthought. And before when I did independent reading, it worked really well.

Faced with an uncritical curriculum, there were times where Olivia tried to insert critical questions that she felt needed to be asked, posing a problem even though the curriculum hadn't previewed it for her. But Olivia's problem posing stance got her 'in trouble':

Bill: That's interesting. Have they been able to or have you prompted them to draw any parallels to today or to their lives?

Olivia: I haven't just because I'm trying to get better at following standards and what Common Core wants and 'text to self' references are not a thing anymore. Every time I do it I get in trouble.

Bill: Every time you do it, what?

Olivia: I get in trouble, if I'm writing questions that ask them, "What do you think about" or "Would you". It's like "No you can't do that. It's not text dependent, no one cares about text to self references."
'Text to self' connections are not a part of Common Core. Yeah. There's no standard about making a reference or a connection or anything to yourself at all. It's always a 'text to text' connection or a character to character connection or compare and contrast two different texts but it's never like taking something that you're reading and inserting it into the real world.

The determination to marginalize subjectivity (in this case, a student's connection to a text) in favor of objectivity (a supposedly agreed upon identifiable author's purpose) shows how this curriculum undermines critical perspectives on literacy, which encourage readers to develop reciprocal, mutually defining relationship with the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). This curricular determination - by the authors of the Common Core, Engage, and AUSL - is arguably part of a concerted effort to promote a positivist view of knowledge construction that is the foundation of the high-stakes, standardized testing movement.

It is similarly antithetical to a liberatory pedagogy that undergirds the Critical Dialogue of this project, where the process of humanization is through reading the word and the world.

How does a critically minded teacher like Olivia operate in a space where the expected curriculum is so clearly in contrast to her beliefs and her teacher education? What does she begin to understand about the purpose of her role as teacher if the only expectation of her and her students is to produce the “correct” pieces of text on one of the many tests¹⁷ she is expected to deliver regularly?

Olivia: The Engage curriculum always wants kids to get into these literary circles to read Shakespeare. That was the first or second day we were doing circles. This is a class that I have a very hard time managing. This is also a day where more than half of them were missing because they're on a field trip. It wasn't a typical day.

We were in a circle discussing Tyshawn Lee¹⁸. It wasn't my intent to spend the whole class talking about that. I just want them to be in a circle and talking and segue into the harder, a little more boring stuff. I told her some of that...but there's no room to do anything.

I was doing something like that with the kids and my principal came in. When she comes in, she doesn't say anything. She just takes notes and leaves and puts them in a spreadsheet, and we talk about it the next day. She was like, "That's a far cry from Shakespeare."

Bill: She saw that more as suspect than something contributing on your part.

Olivia: Yeah. It's so hypocritical. There's this push to be college ready, ready for life, but we treat them like babies. It's great to be able to read Shakespeare, but I think it would do more good knowing how to just read the newspaper and that kind of text. I think that will prepare you more for being a real person.

Viewed through the lens of this project, this exchange between Olivia and her administration (and the administrators of the administrators) is not a critical dialogue, but a one-way, hierarchical directive.

Olivia chose an AUSL school, in part, because she wanted a school where things were orderly, similar to the trusting and caring childhood experience in CPS. But she found that a school run in this sort of hierarchical manner was not orderly, trusting, or caring. The silencing of a critical curriculum, a critical

¹⁷ Olivia has recounted at least 4 different unrelated tests that her students were constantly ‘prepping’ to take – tests prepared by the Engage curriculum, a monthly ANet, the biannual NWEA, and the PARCC test.

¹⁸ Tyshawn Lee was a 9 year old from the Clifton neighborhood who was shot and killed on November 2, 2015, a few blocks from Olivia’s school. The murder was intentional, allegedly done in retaliation for actions carried out by Tyshawn’s father.

teacher, and the curiosity of students around issues that are more personal and closer to their experience hardly seems a path for liberation and transformation.

Philip and Tiffany: Working in the Gap in Mathematics

To become a great teacher, one must learn to work the gap, that often elusive and sometimes enormous space between what is and what could be. Bill Ayers, *To Teach*, p.137

The two other participants in the project - Philip and Tiffany - found themselves in situations where they were neither free to create their own curriculum nor scrutinized by their administrators for a lack of adherence to the expected curriculum. Both math teachers in their first year, Philip - 6th grade - and Tiffany - 5th and 6th grade - were expected to deliver a purchased math curriculum as it was designed. But there were no curriculum monitors or instructional coaches coming to check if they were meeting the pacing guide that textbook companies send along with their materials nor were there explicit orders that they should refrain from deviating or supplementing the expected curriculum with materials or ideas they believed, in their professional opinion, might help.

One of the challenges that both teachers faced was what to do in that middle space of freedom and being told what to do. It's worth noting that Claire's experience with her one 7th grade math period was similar to Philip and Tiffany's experience. As described above, Claire had autonomy and support to teach Social Studies from a critical perspective. The expectation from her administration was that the math content could similarly have real world relevance and application. Despite this terrain, Claire had a more difficult time applying a curricular standpoint lens to her math instruction than she did with her Social Studies Instruction:

I don't feel like that's a critically conscious curriculum. I would love to be pulling in more project based learning, more re-thinking math. But there's only so much capacity, and this curriculum is good enough. And it's a curriculum that they know and are familiar with the process

Tiffany and Philip, like Claire, found that the curriculum was "good enough" and wanted, at first, to concentrate on fidelity, accuracy, and adherence to the expected. Philip told me, "I'm trying not to stretch myself too thin. Once I get this down- you know, I'm trying to learn how to teach math. Once I

do that, I can pull in the other pieces once I get this – the very complicated, but actually simple, piece of the whole puzzle.” Similarly, Tiffany said:

I think that I’ve become so focused on the kids being able to just do the math, you know. Because they are behind. That I was just like, we gotta go, we gotta go, we gotta go. And I know... the messed up part is I know it’s kinda the wrong way to go about it. Cause if this was more relevant to them and they had more of a stake then they’d learn it, you know what I mean, just the same.

All three teacher participants were conscious of the limits of their curriculum, the ways in which it failed to “validate” the experiences of their students or make the mathematical knowledge “accessible.” As first year teachers, they appeared to decide that their best option was to work the gap - teach the curriculum they were expected to teach, but find ways of bringing in additional material and experiences that better reflected their beliefs about Critical Dialogic teaching.

Philip, for example, very early on in the year introduced a project called ‘Emotion Logs’ where students noted (on a teacher-prepared sheet, at the start of class) how they were feeling that day. Over the course of several weeks, the students then had a set of longitudinal data to analyze and practice some of the mathematical concepts that Philip was expected to teach. The findings from the data analysis then sparked dialogue within the classroom between Philip and individual students, and also whole group:

One thing that I like is the emotions log. That’s a way to tie in their experience and relate it to math and reflect on that. They did ratios on the emotions that they felt in September – whatever they had filled out since I gave it to them. I’m reading through those now – their ratios. They did positive to negative emotions, easy to hard, and then happy/angry/sad. They did ratios of all of those, went through and tallied. I made sure to tell them, positive to negative - just because you go to the negative side, it’s not a bad thing. It’s a solid place we have to visit once in awhile, not saying that these are bad.

I have a list of students who I want to check in with because they had a high negative to positive ratio, had a lot more negative to positive. So I have students that I’m cluing in on, like Dania in 302, she’s been sad and lonely every single day on her log, and since I noticed that and because LaSandra, who sits next to her noticed that, Dania, LaSandra and I have had some really awesome conversations and experiences since then. So I’m interested to see Dania’s emotions log moving forward as it changes; it was literally sad and lonely every single time. So, I told them (Dania and LaSandra) my goal is to change that – not that it’s a bad thing to be there, but we don’t want to be there all the time. So how can we get you out of there, is our goal now.

And so, those kinds of revelations I think are a way to- not necessarily a tie in to community - but a way to tie in their lived experience. And that's one piece that I want to build on, you know, can I expand that idea, can I learn more about the community by tying in this piece – hey, this is going on down the street or.. whatever.. I don't know much about the community. But I can tie-in lots of stuff to this idea. I just have to find the tools to do that, and that requires research on my part, a little more knowledge about what's going on. That is a goal of mine, I just don't know what it looks like, yet.

As the year progressed, Philip modified the project to reflect new math goals and also additional social emotional goals, specifically asking kids to name what they are thankful or grateful for; the new data leads to new dialogue.

Philip: They handed in a pie chart based on the ratios, two pie charts, but there's so much in a pie chart. You're doing angles, percentages ... there's a lot in that, so I like it. I've changed the format of the emotion log, so they keep track of the date, two emotions, hours of sleep, and then two things or people that they're thankful for. They have to name them and be as specific as possible. It's not mom and dad, it's what are their names. It's not brother, sister or family, it's who in your family. Not video games, it's what video game. It's not food, it's what food, name it. As specific as possible and it's got to be different every day.

Bill: You're building a relationship, you're learning about what's important to them

Philip: Yeah, 'I'm thankful for that person.'

Bill: So it's served for these small conversations, small dialogues?

Philip: Yeah, and I think that thinking about it, having them talk about it with somebody else ...Then can they look at it and reflect on their own behavior? And say, 'Okay, I have a lot of negative emotions this week. Why do I think that is? What's going on for me?' And can we do that every month or every twenty logs? We do this and then we reflect on it, and then we have three logs, and then we reflect on those three. Do they change? The idea moving forward is that it would be a reflection on the reflection. To look for patterns, which is math. I pointed it out to them. I was like, 'Guys, I want you to notice...did you see the energy change? Did you see that? I saw it.' Because people were complimenting each other randomly. The energy changed. I was like, 'Guys, this is like a virus. It works both ways. Love and hate. It works both ways. It is a virus. I want to point that out.' Some of them were like, 'I know, that is kind of weird.' And it was. You can see that. Positivity breeds positivity, so how can you generate that...

Bill: Again, to be a social justice issue.

Philip: Yeah, exactly.

Bill: Also a critical dialogue, right?

Philip: A different approach to it, yeah. It's more spiritual in my mind, but also scientific and mathematical.

In November, Tiffany created and facilitated an inquiry project that tied mathematics to the 'real world,' where kids posed questions, conducted research, and presented their findings.

Tiffany: Basically it was connecting real world careers to mathematics, and how they use math. It was not like they had to do much math. They just had to explore how careers require math. They might have been throwing out terms like they're using.... I remember some of the things. ...They were doing electrical engineering and she had a whole bunch garb that she had taken from the internet. But it was impressive. The kids were like, "ooh, ah." I think, in that way, it at least made it seem like there was an end goal that was bigger than the classroom, even if I'm not sure they were understanding, exactly, specifically how mathematics tied to it. It was exciting for them. That's what I needed.

Bill: They were driving it themselves. They weren't doing it because either the curriculum or the teacher said do this.

Tiffany: Yeah. I mean, they have to do the project....

Bill: Of course, but I mean-

Tiffany: They got to choose a career. It was pretty open ended. It was like these are the questions that I want answered. You have different formats. I don't care how you present your information. It just has to make sure you cover all these bases. They could do a poster. They could do a video. They could interview somebody. They could do a song. They could do Google slides, or some sort of digital presentation.

Bill: Did people do that?

Tiffany: Yeah. Actually a lot of my 6th graders chose the Google slides, which is interesting because I think that they've used it before for other presentations. They all shared it with me, so I projected it.

Bill: That's nice.

Tiffany: Yeah. Also, the added benefit too is one of the things that I've felt is that there's a really big lack of community within the classroom, and because the classes are so short it's really hard for me to give kids that opportunity to express themselves, and build active

listening in the classroom. I feel like when they go up there to present that's another way for me to interact with each kid in a way that I haven't seen ..

Working the gap seemed to be a decision that the three teacher participants were satisfied with, in terms of math instruction. This made me wonder whether or not it had something to do with the content of mathematics - as opposed to Social Studies and Language Arts, discussed above with Claire and Olivia. The sample sizes make it impossible to claim causality, but my experience as a classroom teacher and teacher educator support the idea that it can be easier to create curriculum that addresses social justice in the Humanities than in Math and Science. Even when a teacher like Tiffany, who has strong Mathematical content knowledge, has studied the theory of math from a curricular standpoint, and seen and participated in classroom examples as a student teacher, enters her first classroom as the teacher of record, it can be challenging.

Bill: Is there a critical aspect to (the planning) that you're bringing? Your whole master's project (when Tiffany was a teacher candidate last year) was all about critical math.

Tiffany: No, not really on that end.

Bill: Any other aspects of critical-ness, criticality?

Tiffany: Yeah. I'm trying to translate all this stuff into Spanish. There's that part of it, I mean the word problems I try to make a little bit more...

Bill: More what?

Tiffany: Relevant to the kids. It's fairly superficial, you know. Switching out the names and putting it in a context that they might understand, you know.

Bill: Yeah. Why is that superficial?

Tiffany: I just remember when I was doing my research, they were like 'this is what a lot of people think social justice is, you just switch out the names and put in new words and there you go.' But it's supposed to be getting the kids thinking about their world and apply this stuff to their lives. So that's not really there.

Bill: Why is that not there?

Tiffany: I don't know, maybe I'm just falling back to what I think is easier and more comfortable at this moment because I need to have a handle on it. And managing those sorts of

projects is a lot more difficult. Cause I remember even during my student teaching. It went well, but it was a lot of work. It was a lot of work, and it was just three classes. So... Yeah. It would be really difficult with that many kids, you know. Yeah.

Bill: So what's the solution? Should, I mean... Is that all you can muster right now?

Tiffany: No. I mean, I was thinking that I wanted to do more projects.

This raises two phenomenon for me. The first is the way that teachers, in my experience, tend to see math and science instruction as 'legitimate' content that has a very specific and correct way of being taught - a traditional algorithmic approach focused on rules, computation, and accuracy. Is it this belief that makes it difficult to figure out ways to make their math curriculum more critically conscious and culturally relevant in a consistent way?

The second phenomenon has to do with the way that an already existing text or curriculum can establish - or even dictate - a sort of dependency. The teacher participants know that what they're doing is settling for a curriculum that doesn't live up to their own standards. But their Critical Dialogic Stance isn't enough here. Being a first year teacher is taxing and tiring, and I've watched new teachers cling to a curriculum - even one that they may not like or think is great - like it's a life preserver. I'm wondering if even critically educated and critically minded teachers find it hard not to choose the easier path.

Critical Care in the Classroom

Another lens to view Critical Dialogue *in the classroom* is through the framework of Critical Care as it applies to the relationships between the teacher participant and her individual students as well as the relationship between the teacher participant and the classroom community. All of the participants were able to build some individual relationships with students in ways that were consistent with their beliefs about Critical Care toward students. Sometimes this came as a result of intentional, planned approaches, and other times it came as a result of how they responded to unplanned moments. All of the teacher participants also felt some pressure from the various members of their school communities to be more aggressive toward students and sometimes more harsh in their overall approach to classroom

management. They had mixed experiences with their attempts to be more dialogic with the existing power within the classroom.

Based on their prior experiences and their teacher education, the Critical Dialogical Stance the teacher participants had toward their kids acknowledged the deficit, dehumanizing ways that kids can be viewed through in schools by adults, and by the system, itself. They were familiar with, for example the way that hegemonic socialization transmits the notion of a standardization of kids, rewarding quiet and compliant behavior and marginalizing and punishing those kids that do not fit this “norm.” Their stance was informed by a determination to not participate – and actively work against - the school to prison pipeline and the ways that deficit narratives socialize teachers to see Black and Brown kids as needing to be policed and controlled (e.g. Heitzeg, 2009)

A theoretical understanding and some student teaching experience with dialogic Critical Care helped shape a counter-narrative or counter-storytelling (Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) to these deficit ideologies, helping the teacher participants feel prepared to enact some specific critical caring practices. Their Critical Dialogic Stance meant they began the year in search of the infinite possibilities of what children can do, recognizing each child as a whole being with flaws and strengths, seeing each kid as a human in the process of being and becoming, as a future contributing member of a democratic society, capable of making decisions and holding responsibility.

Dialogic Critical Care of Individual Kids

A primary - and initial - Critical Care practice that the teacher participants enacted was intentionally building relationships with individual students. The teacher participants ideally sought individual relationships with each student, but as middle school teachers who were responsible for multiple sections of up to 30 students, this proved to be challenging.

Intentional relationship building. One strategy that seemed successful was intentionally building relationships with kids by engaging with them outside of normal class-time, in favorite activities where they felt successful.

- Bill: Say more about the relationship with kids. Have you seen positive effects from that? Going to basketball games I mean.
- Olivia: Mm-hmm (affirmative). In one sense, they behave better, especially the boys. They're good kids, first of all. All the eighth grade boys on the basketball team really like playing. I talked to their coach, and their coach said that they have to meet a certain standard of behavior in order to be able to play. They know that. I come to the games, so they know that if I see them in a jersey that if they lied to someone, it's going to be an issue, so they behave better.
- I also think that as much as kids really get into it with teachers, I think that they really like seeing teachers there just know that they have an interest in their success and well-being outside of the classroom.
- Bill: Were you surprised by that?
- Olivia: I kind of was. Outside of the classroom, they don't seem to care, I think, but I guess they do.
- Bill: Well, it's funny how kids show that they care, especially adolescents. Sometimes it looks like they don't care, but they very clearly do.
- Olivia: They actually do. Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Urban teacher educators and scholars have made the link between sports and teaching - their similarities, the lessons one can learn from the other (DeMeulenaere, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2010). Part of a dialogic Critical Care meant meeting students where they were, seeing them in positive lights, getting to know who they are outside of one's classroom and in their communities. This was particularly important with students who were challenging for the teacher participants, who saw the ways that intentional relationship building specifically with those students could be more effective than the zero tolerance punitive measures they sometimes found in their schools. Tiffany had success with one of the students who was most challenging to her:

I have been very intentional about trying to build relationships, especially with my homeroom (6th graders), because that was the one that was giving me such grief. I've been sitting in on the chess club days and Francisco is in there, my darling giant Francisco. He's really funny. I played chess with him and he beat me. He had this chance to feel really excited about it. It's set up this rivalry. So I see him and it's like, "I'm going to get you Francisco. Next time I'm going to win." We're able to joke around with one another.

Staying open to kids seeking relationships. Sometimes the intentional individual relationship building came - not from planned, intentional moves on the part of the teacher - but in reaction to moves that students made toward seeking care or building a relationship. This, I think, speaks to the importance of a Critical Dialogic Stance; the teacher cannot initiate every critical, dialogic move, so the teacher participants needed to be positioned to respond to moments brought by others. Sometimes this meant just *listening*.

Bill: You would say, yeah, your teaching is dialogic?

Philip: Yeah, I think so. I think almost, overly so. The kids just come up and start talking. Why are you talking to me for like...I just walked in the room! There's five kids right around me. What could you possibly have to ask? Part of that's my own set-up of my classroom routines. Part of that's also, they just want to talk.

Bill: I think kids always want to talk, right? They always want somebody to listen. But school beats that out of them, sometimes, right? Or it does not allow for it.

Olivia also found that listening to kids when they came into her classroom during unexpected times was an opportunity to build relationships through listening.

Olivia: Anyway, when I have kids with me and it's not their specific class time, they tend to say more and express more and talk more, which is cool. There's a couple of my seventh graders. Two of them are not typical. They don't gossip, and they're not immature. They don't have anything in common with the other seventh graders, so they'll stay up with me for lunch. Then there's a couple eighth grade boys who are always trying to get out of prep. They come with me a lot.

Bill: Why do you think? It seems like you understand exactly why those girls are staying with you, but not the boys. Why are they trying to get out of prep?

Olivia: I don't know. We had a music teacher, but then he quit. Now for music it, they're just in the computer lab. They do this math program called IXL or something like that. One of the boys completed all the lessons already. They know that they don't get a grade for it. What I don't understand is why he'd rather just sit and talk with me instead of get on a computer. If I'm not busy. If I don't have a meeting.

Bill: What does he talk to you about?

Olivia: His plans. What he wants for Christmas. He asks me a lot of questions.

Bill: About you? About your life?

Olivia: About teaching actually.

Bill: Really?

Olivia: Yeah. They know it's hard for me. They're like, "Why do you do this? Why do you come back?" I took a sick day yesterday. They said that they thought I had quit, and I'm like, "What are you talking about. Why would I quit?" He said, "I don't know." They talk a lot about teaching and why I want to do it and why I keep coming back which is weird. I feel like they've had a lot of teachers quit. There's a lot of that.

Critical care promotes a reciprocal, dialogic approach to learning about children and providing the emotional support that they need in a situation; in the process student and teacher learn and grow from and with one another. This “Authentic Care” (Valenzuela, 1999), highlights the reciprocal relationship between a student and teacher that students of color want and expect from their teacher. When teachers take the time to listen and build relationships with individual students, the emotional support they provide can carry weight that can change the psychological approach students have in stressful situations into positive, self-esteem (e.g. Bandura, 1977; Murdock & Miller, 2003).

Othermothering. An aspect of Critical Care that begins to be enacted once relationships with individual students grow and deepen is what Collins (2005) and others have called ‘othermothering.’ Olivia’s approach to Critical Care, in my opinion, borrows from this tradition, and is influenced by her childhood schooling experience on the southside of Chicago. Schooled very close to where she then became a first year teacher, Olivia fondly remembers the many black women who taught and raised her:

Yeah, I know all of my teachers. I can name all of them, kindergarten to eighth grade in order right now. I felt very cared for, and I didn't feel like I was being bossed around. It was a rule. There are rules. There was just none of that. They gave us work, they showed us how to do it, we did it. They taught us how to read, they taught us the math, and then everybody just went about their business. They were just intimidating, like a grandmother.

Her memory of her own schooling experience contrasted with her experience of the kids at Clifton in her first year of teaching.

Olivia: At Clifton, they cried all the time. Very emotional kids. They didn't care who saw it at all. I wasn't used to that at all. I didn't know how to deal with that. Luckily they had good friend that were very consoling. I just wasn't expecting that in 7th and 8th grade. They don't get embarrassed.

Bill: That's interesting. For you, as a kid, growing up in your school, that power of embarrassment was something you were aware of.

Olivia: Right, you didn't make a scene, you didn't cry, you didn't draw attention to yourself. I guess maybe that's a bad thing.

Bill: Well, it seemed to teach you something about growing up and controlling those things. You weren't trying to repress them – they interfered with the work that needed to get done.

Olivia: There just wasn't a place for that. Teachers now are like therapists, parent. My teachers, they were very loving, they were very caring. They were teachers, above all. I'm here to teach, you're here to learn. Let's do our jobs.

Bill: So they felt like parental figures, an extension of the parenting in your house?

Olivia: They were more like grandparent, grandmother. We had a lot of contact with them, but a little scarier a little bit more than your parents. It's like, "Why are you crying? I'll give you something to cry about."

It's interesting, then, to consider the ways in which some of the other teacher participants engage in othermothering, as well, especially if this was not the kind of care they experienced as students, themselves. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) says:

I have intended the foregoing examples of black womanist teachers to help teachers reflect on their own pedagogy. Not all black teachers are womanists not all womanists are African-American women. Because womanism is a politicized appropriation of some of the cultural values of black women, people choose whether or not to become womanists. It is my hope that teachers will use the womanist tradition to inform their own pedagogy and professional identities and will begin to see themselves as part of a long-standing American tradition in which women and men have seen teaching as their contribution to the making of a socially just society. (p. 84-85)

One of the wonderings I've had prior to and throughout this project is whether or not the dialogic Critical Care that Claire, a White Woman or Philip, a White Man, engage in can be described as othermothering or a womanist approach to caring. In this story, Claire's enactment of a Critical Care is

very firm and clear, but warm and kind as well; she connects the care in the moment to the larger hegemonic issues of racism and patriarchy.

I have a great example from this week. I was talking to one of the girls in my class and I was saying, "You're really bright, but we really need to work on this attitude of yours." She was like, "I am who I am and I'm going to be who I need to be." I'm walking out with her from after school, and I'm like, "So let's have a conversation about that, because you really need to think about how you need to code switch your behavior. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with you having an attitude. I think it's important to know who we are and what we stand for, but also we need to be able to get along with people and work within the systems that we are in. If I took up the same attitude that you have with me with my boss, I wouldn't have a job."

I was like, "You are going to have to switch who you are and how you act based on the environment that you're in. I'm not saying that that's necessarily right and for you as a black woman, you're going to have to do it more than other people, because the standard is white men. I have to code switch as a woman all the time to make sure that I'm being assertive enough and doing the things that I need to do to be seen as an authority figure. You're going to have to do that twice as much. You're going to have to do it because you're a woman and you're going to have to do it because you're black."

I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't prepare you for the real world. If I just said, 'Yeah, you have an attitude. That's you. You do your thing.' Then you walk out in the real world and suddenly there's all these things that are being held against you and you catch an attitude with the wrong person and suddenly, you've gotten yourself in a situation you can't handle.

That's not my job. Yes, my job is to make sure that you know how to do Math and that you know about history. The most important part of my job is to know that when you leave my classroom, you can think critically about the world." I was like, "Now I need to go inside, because otherwise, I'm going to get left out here. We can continue this conversation more if you want, end of lecture."

She came in the next morning and she kind of came over to me, real quiet before class really started and she was like, "You know, I don't always show you this, but I think you're a really good teacher," and walked away. I was like, "That made my day."

Claire did not experience this kind of critical caring as a child growing up in a wealthy suburb in Minnesota. The exchange below comes on the heels of Claire retelling a moment where she discussed with one of her 6th grade female students whether or not it was time for her to start wearing a bra.

Bill: Right, so that's a good example of your role being different than teachers were for you when you were a kid.

Claire: I feel like if a teacher had ever said that to me, my mom would have been furious. How dare you? Why would you even be looking at my child in that way? It's a boundary that I'm not always sure how to navigate.

And Philip also seeks a dialogic Critical Care that is arguably othermothering, as well, but struggles with the gender role aspects of carrying this out as someone who identifies as male:

Philip: It's a big part of being what we are, like the human touch and the teacher-student dynamic, like that I can't touch my student. That sounds awful. That sounds awful. Even the fact that I have to say that sounds awful, like that I can't give my students a hug or put my arm around when.

Bill: Or that you have to be thoughtful about who you do that with.

Philip: Exactly. Yeah, yeah. I have to be very careful with that, especially as a male.

Bill: Right. That's generally true.

Philip: I should be able to hug my students. You know, they're having a hard time. I should be able to just fucking give them a hug. I get it. I get it. I don't do that because I can't. It's not like I'm going to be fucking hugging my students every time they came in the door anyways.

Bill: No, right.

Philip: But, like if they're having hard time or something, if they need a hug, I want to be able to give them a hug. I don't want to feel weird about it.

Bill: It's one of the big challenges I feel like as a male teacher. It's a bummer, because so much of our work is emotional and kids, especially adolescents need that physical touch.

Philip: It's part of why they behave the fucking way they do because they need the sensation. They need to touch and you can't do it, whereas if we actually engaged that and did it in a respectful way, we could teach them something.

The teaching practice of 'building a relationship' with individual students is much more complex than other practices like setting up a classroom library or planning a mini-lesson. The task of caring for another human requires patience and persistence and a sociocultural historical understanding of what students - and in urban schools like those of the teacher participants - students of color want and expect from their teacher. A dialogic Critical Care approach to individual relationship building was something that all of the teacher participants were able to enact, regardless of school structure or philosophy.

Dialogic Classroom Communities of Care

Dialogic Critical Care centers on the reciprocal relationships between *individuals* - teacher and student. But what does critical care of students of color look like at the *classroom* level, in a community of individuals? If we apply/extend the reciprocal trusting conditions of individual relationships to a classroom community, dialogic Critical Care in the classroom would seek to create a space where trust and reciprocity were shared amongst all members of the classroom. A dialogue about power and rules in a classroom community would consider why rules are necessary and how rules have been used for collective good or harm. A teacher engaging in dialogic Critical Care toward her classroom community would create opportunities for student voices to balance the teacher's, and articulate when the adult must be in charge and when power can be shared or led by students. Olivia described her Stance toward dialogic Critical Care with her 8th graders:

I like to treat them (the 8th graders) like they are going into high school, which they are. I like to treat them like small adults.... I want to make them feel successful. I want to make them feel like they can be successful. So a lot of that is in terms of just I'm going to tell you how to do it, I'm going to give you all the tools, I'm going to give you examples. It's going to be up to you whether you 1) do it, 2) try, 3) take it seriously. The kids that are doing that, I am a cheerleader, just not like ... I'm not super smiley, I'm not like very bubbly.

I just don't want to treat them like kindergartners. I want to motivate them to be more self sufficient. They can do it, they can do it. I want them to understand. First of all I want it to be intrinsic. I want them to want to do well, want to do the work because they want to do well. I don't want them to have to depend on another person, me or anybody else to do well for me, or do well for this person. It is my ultimate goal that they want to be successful because *they* want to be successful.

But creating this type of caring community is challenging, particularly if you are in your first year, where so many aspects of the job are brand new. A new teacher may enter the classroom with the intention – a Stance - to enact these elements, but if the partners in that endeavor are not willing, it won't happen. The teacher participants found themselves struggling for answers, and felt compelled – socialized – to adopt some of the practices of their colleagues and demands by their administrators.

Olivia: My grade level partner, she went through the AUSL residency, so she eats, sleeps, lives, breathes AUSL so like I have my kids coming out of a room and one of them

has a black like zip up, not a jacket, a black thick sweater and another one has her sweater tied around her waist, and then two of the boys don't have their shirts tucked in. We were just passing her, but she makes them go back in the room and put up their sweaters and do all this stuff and I go follow them back to the room.

20 minutes of our (schoolwide) morning meeting was dedicated to uniforms and then my grade level partner was like, "Well were you not in the meeting this morning?"

I had completely disregarded everything they had said. I didn't think it was a big deal. I've come to not notice those types of things. Before I would let them come out of the room in their hoodies and stuff. Let them wear them in the room but I would make them take them off before they went to her room but now we can't even do that. We can't even be in the hallway with those things on.

Bill: Now what?

Olivia: Now we can't even be in the hallways with the hoodies and stuff on. I'm paying more attention to that stuff because I feel like I'm part of the problem if everybody's doing it but me. The kids already villainize her especially my 7th graders, they hate her. I don't really know why they don't like her at all. Honestly it's probably because I let them get away with way more. I didn't go through AUSL like you did, I don't care about those things, and I should, just for the simple fact to make her life easier and make her not be the villain.

A critical dialogue between Olivia, her co-workers, the students and families might lead to some robust decisions that share elements of both visions (for example, whether or not wearing a sweater in a cold classroom is an unreasonable or reasonable choice for an 8th grader to make for herself). Instead, there appears to be no dialogue at all; the only communication is a scolding from her grade level partner ("were you not at the meeting?!")

One of the elements of this project that I was particularly interested in was what happens when there is no critical dialogue – what happens to teachers more critical approaches if instead of being allowed to operate from those positions, they're shamed or pressured into. If we spotlight two of the quote from the first snippet of dialogue - *"I feel like I'm part of the problem if everybody's doing it but me"* and *"I don't care about those things, and I should, just for the simple fact to make her life easier"* - I think we can see an example of the impact of socialization that Olivia may have been experiencing at that moment,

pushing her away from her stance that she hopes to treat kids like adults, and toward the stance of following suit in a compliance driven environment.

Class-wide Behavior Systems. The challenge of immediately building dialogic caring communities was formidable for all four teacher participants. Another classroom management practice that some of the teacher participants felt pressured to adopt was using a class-wide behavior system; these sometimes looked like public record keeping of students (usually negative) behavior, and was often tied to consequences of varying levels of severity. Claire tried to develop a system in her classroom that monitored student engagement and effort, in order to feedback to students what she was seeing, but decoupled that system from any punishments.

Bill: Why is that the right thing to do? Are you doing it out of necessity, to keep your head above water and to have some order in the classroom?
You're using a technique that, yeah, may be harmful in the short run, but at least it's keeping things in order, right? There's an argument for that.

Claire: I would say though, that it's not necessarily harmful. It's actually created more structure and clearer expectations for the kids. Our kids need structure. They don't necessarily have structure as in like, clarity around where they're going to be staying next or who they're going to be staying with. It's good for kids to have structure when they come to school.

Bill: I agree with you. It's why you and I worked on this system in the first place. I know from my own experience that I didn't have those things in place initially and when I started to put them in place, the transformation that happened was overwhelmingly positive.

We could also step out of this for a second and point to points systems and you and I both know the counter-argument to this, which is deficit thinking to say, kids don't have structure at home and using extrinsic motivation is only teaching kids to perform for the teacher, in the short term, or so that they can get some kind of reward. It's not teaching them the deeper reasons.

Claire: There's a difference between doing it to prevent chaos and create kids who just follow the rules because they're scared, versus, doing it to create clear expectations and also engaging in more critical conversations with kids about the behaviors that are happening with the evidence, like we were talking about.

Bill: Right. That's powerful. Do you think that system that you're using is giving you opportunities (to have critical conversations)?

- Claire: I think it opens up more opportunities to have honest conversations with students, but also in that way that it's triangulated, so that it's not just, you and I have an issue. (Instead, it's)Here's the evidence, so let's talk about how we can fix it. Let's talk about how we can work together better.
- Bill: A point system that monitors kids behavior and their effort in terms of work, can be oppressive, but it can also, if used the right way, can be both critical and dialogical.
- Claire: I think so. Systems and tools are only systems and tools.
- Bill: ... In the hands of who is using them.

Incentives. Another classroom management practice that the teacher participants were being socialized to use was using 'incentives' for what the teacher deemed to be positive behavior. Incentives have been around for a long time as a motivator for students - from gold stars to GPAs (Kohn, 1999) - but with the advent of technology, keeping track of who has 'earned' and who has 'failed to earn' has become easier and easier. Class Dojo, a popular app that allows teachers to project avatars of each student and publicly track them on different behavioral aspects (participation rate, effort) was something all of the participants had to grapple with. Tiffany, for example, said:

And I told you when we started doing class dojos, I feel like such a sellout. I spent two years learning all this shit and now I'm doing it anyways. It all went out the window. So, sometimes I'm like, ohh, that would be nice, to go back to that. And I feel like, I don't want to get stuck in bad habits. I want to keep pushing myself. And so, I want to be able to establish sort of routine and expectations and procedures, but I know that there needs to be something else.

Similarly, Olivia told me:

This brings me to another point. Their incentive system. If I have learned one thing from this school, it's kids really, really, really, like incentives are the only thing that makes them do things. I don't know how to make them be intrinsically motivated. They just need incentives.

Sharing Power. As the teacher participants became a little more comfortable in their own classroom communities, and saw the power of individual relationships beginning to transform the culture amongst the students, they noticed that they could try out some more dialogic critical care approaches to building classroom community and dealing with moments when students broke rules. Tiffany experimented with sharing decisions around consequences with groups of students who consistently broke the rules.

Bill: So what are some things you've done to try to get there with them?

Tiffany: When they mess up, letting them come up with their own consequences. That happened. Like just today, I was letting some of the kids do the class dojo thing, one of the kids. And a bunch of boys encouraged him to give the whole class a class dojo point when they hadn't earned it. And they did it and I'd noticed that they'd done it so I called them all out. Like be honest, right now I'm gonna ask you this question. And they all admitted it. And at first they were like, no but it was him. No, it was him. And finally they were like, well, we were all doing it, cause we told him to do it, it was all our fault.

This was all after school, I held them for a second. And I was like, so what do you think we need to do about this to fix it? And they were like, well you should take away that one point that we gained. And I was like uh huh, that's a given. And I was like, "what about you guys?" And they were like, take away two points from us, no take away three points from us. And they were like, noo! They argued a little bit and finally decided two points, and I was like ok, two points from each of you is fair. And then they seemed happy with it.

I think the biggest win on that was the fact that I feel like with them a lot of times in that class in particular in terms of management and getting to talk with them, it's like they don't want to accept responsibility for things. So hearing them all be like, ok, it was all of us doing this thing. I understand how I was accountable for this and responsible for egging this kid on and telling him to do it in the first place. That was kind of interesting to me. And the fact that they came up with their own punishment. And I was like ok, that sounds good.

Bill: Right. But it was also a reasonable consequence. It was fair in your mind, right? You gave them the opportunity to decide, but then they also...

When you gave them that opportunity, they rose to the occasion. So giving them that, holding them accountable, but also giving them space to hold themselves accountable.

That's another example of, it's more dialogical, right? This challenge that I think teachers have, which is seeing people say to you that you have to be stricter. Which, that's fine, but that actually doesn't always work. So there has to be this balance of trusting kids to make a good decision for themselves.

Philip experimented with teaching kids to stand up to their teacher.

Philip: I was like, "Yeah, for sure." I want to reward them for just having the courage to come up and talk to their teacher about their grade or whatever it is. I've had a couple of students, I had Riya come up and she had a question about a check mark she received. She was very nervous about it. She had a talk with me and we talked at the end of the day and I said, "So, what's up?" She said, "Well, I got this check mark... I'm not really sure why. I think it's because of this." I said, "I appreciate you talking

with me. This is why I think you got it and this is the policy around it...this was the thinking behind it"

I wanted to verbally praise them, "Thank you. This is what you should be doing. I want you coming in here and talking with me, asking me about check marks, asking me about that. That's what this is about." I had Samir. He had emailed me about a check mark he received. He emailed me Friday night and I was like, "I'd be happy to talk with you about it on Monday." I want you to be comfortable coming to talk to me about that. That's your job." I want to impress that upon them. That's your job, dude.

Bill: I think it's interesting what we were just talking about in terms of...You are all the things that represent the dominant culture so it's like these kids of color who are younger than you of color and in some cases gender, all these things can come to you and say, "I want to challenge your authority essentially." It's hard enough as it is for peer to peer...

Philip: Well, that's why I brought it into the dialogue. It is a scary... Because I remember doing it. I was that kid.
I talked to my coaches, I remember sophomore year standing in the stairwell with my assistant coach. I was nervous as fuck. I had it written it out, man. Like, "This is why I deserve more playing time." "This is the things I've done. I've worked hard. I've earned this." I remember those moments. My parents pushed me to do that. I think those are defining moments.

Bill: I agree.

Philip: I really want to reward them for that. I want them to understand that the message I want to communicate is when they advocate for themselves, they've been successful so that they don't get shut down right away and then in sixth grade they learn there's no communication up the ladder, so to speak.

Bill: I think that's a great example of being a dialogic teacher. That's really interesting.

In each of these examples, we see new teachers trying to figure out some way of challenging the hierarchical power structure they know to exist in schools and attempting to create a critical dialogic caring classroom community. One of the biggest challenges in having a critical dialogue with power is when and how to assert an appropriate level of adult power inside a classroom. The participants in the project embody that complexity, as each of them has their own critical dialogical stance on their own power with kids.

Spontaneous Integration of Curricular Standpoint and Critical Care

The teacher participants tried to enact Curricular Standpoint whenever possible in their planned instruction, and tried to enact Critical Care with their individual and classroom community relationships during their informal moments or when organizing responses to classroom disruptions. These efforts by the teacher participants were attempts to create some order and structure, to organize what can seem like a very disorganized experience in the first year of teaching.

The two stories below are examples of unplanned moments where the teacher participants called on their critical lens on content and teaching – their curricular standpoint – and their dialogic lens on relationships with individuals and the whole class - their critical care in the classroom – and integrated them in response to spontaneity from their students.

Philip: It came up in a transition. It was when we were talking about ... the Paris attacks¹⁹ (in November 2015). Somebody had mentioned that in class and I just said, "You know guys, I understand there's some things that are going on in this world that aren't the greatest. There are some bad things happening and you may or may not be connected to it. You may or may not be aware. I just want to let you know, I want to give you a space right now if you have questions. I'm here. My door's open. Come talk to me. Whatever. You want to process that."
One of the kids was like, "Is this therapy?" I'm like, "No man. This is what we do. This is what we do. We talk about this. This is how we process things. You can call it therapy it's just what humans do."
And, then Samir, he goes, "But they're not, that's not Muslim. I'm Muslim. It says in the Quran, you do not do this."

Bill: Oh wow.

Philip: He was animated. I said, "I see that. We see that." It's like, I know. This is where we're at.

Bill: Say more about that. That's fascinating to me.

Philip: Like I said, it was at the end of the day and I said, "Yeah, I know. You're right. You're right. I don't know what else to say about that. You are right."
I think I responded just like ... "What we're dealing with is people don't know that. They make assumptions. People don't know that. That's a stereotype. It's stereotyping. That's

¹⁹ The November 2015 Paris attacks were a series of coordinated attacks that occurred on Friday 13 November 2015 in Paris, France and the city's northern suburb, Saint-Denis, during a football match and followed by several mass shootings, and a suicide bombing, at cafés and restaurants. Gunmen carried out another mass shooting and took hostages at a concert in the Bataclan theatre, leading to a stand-off with police.

what it is. Unfortunately, that goes on. I think you're right. It's a symptom of humanity. It's not a symptom of both being a Muslim and human."

I don't know exactly how I responded to it. Something along those lines because a girl came up to me right afterwards and was like 'I have family in Paris.' I was just talking about her the other day. How was that for you and what's that like? She said, well, it kind of scared me. My family weren't, I don't want to say affected by it, they weren't like in the shit is what she said. 'I have a lot of family members there and we've been talking to them.' I said, "I hope they're okay. Let me know if you want to talk about it."

Philip's critical dialogic stance in this moment allowed him to open the door and invite questions during one of those many unofficial moments in a day, a 'transition.' The response from kids - "is this therapy" - reveals how uncharacteristic this stance may have been in their experience in school, but Philip skillfully normalizes this experience.

Philip then tried to move from that stance into action, to set critical dialogue in motion. He acknowledged and validated the fund of knowledge that Samir had shared - being Muslim, about the Quran, and that the attack was not reflective of Muslim teaching or beliefs. It's possible, given the Muslim population in Philip's school that this is something many kids know and agree with, but it's also possible that this idea may not be shared in the room. In the US, Islamophobia has been high since 2001, but it seemed to be at an all time high in 2015-16, and there was plenty of it coming through the media in the wake of this attack. Philip attempted to put that into context for all of his students. And he names that he doesn't know what else to say.

Moments like this can be challenging for any teacher because they require the reflective ability to be critically conscious of what you are saying, as you're saying it, reading the room and thinking about all of the learners and their various needs simultaneously. Planned Critical Dialogue - through Curricular Standpoint or Critical Care - can allow teachers the time to anticipate student misperceptions and prepare responses that are clear and honest. Spontaneous moments require a different kind of response.

This example also points to the pressure of suddenly being asked to be an authority on a subject you're unprepared to speak on. The pressure is even higher when students (and the teacher) have heightened emotions and trauma about the topic. I think this pressure is why people tend to move toward

a declaration of fact in those moments - to say, "this is the answer, let's move on." Rooting yourself and then speaking from a critical dialogical stance is more challenging than brushing it under the rug. It requires more bravery. Claire had a similar spontaneous moment to Phillip.

Claire: We watched a documentary on the Freedom Riders (and then we watched) a video of the (University of Missouri) protests in class and then compared it to the freedom rides. The kids were like, "They're fighting for the same stuff but it's been like 40 years." I was like, "Yeah." There was like a video and we read the list of demands (from the students) at the University of Missouri and we talked about them in Social Studies. We had good dialogue about that (the Freedom Riders) in relation to what was going on in the University of Missouri..

Bill: That's got to be profound for them. ..using something so current has got to be so engaging for them especially since it has students who were talking about the things that they're studying at that period.... That's where sort of interest and engagement and also seeing themselves in history sort of converge, right?

Claire: Yeah. So then with my sixth-grade class. I read them the letter that a bunch of professors (from the University of Missouri, in support of the protesting students) had put together. One of the kids was like, "Why are you reading this to us?" I was like, "I hope that when you go from Jones you go on to high school, and if you go on to college and you go to an institution, where you'll experience this things, I hope that you know that you have other people around who are supporting you, who have been through it that you can turn to."
They were like clapping, I was like, "You don't have to clap, I'm just saying, that's why I'm reading it to you."

This moment is not quite as spontaneous as the moment with Philip described above - Claire seems to be retelling a moment where she planned to read the letter (from University of Missouri faculty supporting the protests). But her response to the spontaneous curiosity of the students ("Why are you reading us this?") and the clapping by the students I think illustrates again how the teacher participants could respond from a Critical Dialogic Stance in a way that reflects their critical beliefs about teaching and about caring for kids. Claire has political clarity with why she has connected the Freedom Riders study with the contemporary student activism as well as a political clarity about why she cares about her students and wants them to succeed. Neither choice is lightly considered; rather both choices are rooted in a liberatory and transformative belief about teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Working in the classroom, where much of their first year was spent, the teacher participants tried to approach the formal planning and instruction from the perspective of Curricular Standpoint, and tried to approach relationship building with individuals and their overall classroom communities from the perspective of Critical Care. These Critical Dialogue approaches were sometimes very successful, but a dialogue is at least a two-person endeavor. Preparation to enact Critical Dialogue is necessary but not sufficient; students, fellow teachers, administrators, and other members of their school communities had socializing effects on their work as first year teachers in ways that supported or silenced their critical and dialogic practices. The experiences of the teacher participants highlights the importance of a grounded Critical Dialogic Stance, both as a resistance to the transmission of hegemonic socialization but also as a ‘necessary posture’ (Shor & Freire, 1987) to recognizing and then facilitating powerful moments that weren’t part of the daily lesson plan.

CHAPTER 5: CRITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE SCHOOLHOUSE

Introduction

Zooming out slightly from the focus on the teacher participants critical dialogue ‘In the Classroom,’ my analysis now considers the interactions between the teacher participants and others in the schoolhouse - the collection of classrooms and other school spaces filled with various professional adults. The two groups of adults the teacher participants spent most time interacting with were their experienced teacher colleagues and their school Administration.²⁰ In my analysis, I make a division between these two groups; this dichotomy is, in part, recognition that the Critical Dialogue experiences are different between these two groups. There is also a tremendous amount of overlap and intersection amongst the adults inside the schoolhouse of the teacher participants, and my analysis acknowledges this. The separation in my analysis is in an effort to make the analysis easier to follow, narratively.

In terms of the basic methods of Critical Dialogue - initiating it, engaging in it, nurturing it - there were a number of similarities to the Critical Dialogue between the teacher participants and their students in the classroom. In both cases, a Critical Dialogic Stance, rooted in theoretical understandings, experiences, and beliefs in Curricular Standpoint and a dialogic Critical Care, positioned the teacher participants to be ready to respond to unexpected interactions and prepared them to engage others in strategic, intentional dialogues, with the hope of making the experience of working together in an urban school more critical.

But Critical Dialogue with the adults in the schoolhouse also had some clear differences from Critical Dialogue with students, which the teacher participants needed to recognize and adjust to in these new adult partnerships. In the classroom, the teacher participants held much - but certainly not all - of the power, and controlled, in many cases, the epistemologies. But in their relationship with the professional adults in the schoolhouse, the power and epistemologies moved out of the hands of the teacher participants and up the hierarchical ladder to their more experienced colleagues and - even higher - to

²⁰ The Administration in this project described can refer to the Principal and one or two Assistant Principals, and occasionally a “Dean.” The Participants sometimes refer to these individuals as Admin.

their Administrators. As the newest members of the professional team in the schoolhouse, the teacher participants' status as novices was usually present and illuminated.

The power differences were not always impediments to Critical Dialogue opportunities, however. When there was alignment of beliefs between the teacher participants and their colleagues and administrators, those adults were able to problem solve or restructure school experiences to prioritize the needs of students of color and their families. Conversely, misalignment of beliefs may have created hurdles and challenges for teacher participants to engage their colleagues and administrators. In some more extreme cases, the hegemonic socialization transmitted from Administrators and experienced colleagues had destabilizing effects on the teacher participants.

Critical Dialogue with Colleagues

The teacher participants entered their first year as classroom teachers with some understanding of the systemic structure of urban schools - specifically CPS – including the ways that structure is destabilizing toward teachers. During their preservice years, the participants studied the CPS policy landscape and worked alongside experienced CPS teachers, so they saw and experienced firsthand the ways the Mayor and the CPS Board have heaped criticism and blame on teachers, taken deliberate steps to delegitimize the CTU, and slashed budgets that have driven out experienced teachers (Perlstein, 2016). This is part of a larger neoliberal assault on public education, of which experienced, union teachers are one of the biggest targets (Watkins, 2012; Lipman, 2013).

The attempt to drive out experienced teachers in pursuit of a bottom line and an unprotected labor force are decisions made in boardrooms, not classrooms in schoolhouses. On the ground, the loss of experienced teachers can be devastating; veteran teachers can be resources of incredible knowledge - community knowledge about the neighborhood, relational knowledge of parent and family histories and dynamics, professional knowledge about the technical aspects of classroom teaching, system knowledge of how the bureaucracy functions. Eliminating that historical knowledge can have deleterious effects on the function of a school.

Not every experienced colleague in the system brings immeasurable worth to urban schools, however. One of the outcomes of the systematic oppression toward experienced teachers may be that they feel undervalued, and can be skeptical of new regimes and fads. In my experience in urban schools, sometimes this manifests as indifference toward new teachers, but too often this can look like hazing (Darling-Hammond, 2008).

The teacher participants, therefore, were simultaneously open to but also skeptical of their experienced colleagues, eager to learn, but critical of bad pedagogy or harmful advice. Similar to critical dialogue with students, the teacher participants tried to be in a Critical Dialogic Stance, but Critical Dialogue was only possible when the other person was interested in any dialogue. Knowing that it may not happen right away or ever, the teacher participants needed to be vigilant but patient.

The experience of the four participants engaging with their colleagues was broad and diverse. In some cases, the participants' critical dialogue with a colleague or a team of colleagues led to mutual respect, new learning for new and veteran teachers, and powerful moments of collaboration that benefited kids, teachers, parents and administration. In other cases, the participants were never able to enter into critical dialogue with colleagues they needed to work with on a daily basis, and had to watch them mistreat kids. In a few cases this even led participants to blame themselves, and begin to consider how to shift their practice to be less critical, in order to fit in.

Reacting to Initial Encounters with Colleague Socialization

One of the first challenges for the teacher participants was navigating the sometimes-unexpected socialization coming from their colleagues in their new school. Throughout this project, I've acknowledged that the socialization of new teachers is not always hegemonic; schools are also spaces for counter-hegemonic socialization, and each of the teacher participants engaged with others who in some way either shared or pushed their critical perspective on teaching. Generally, the teacher participants had favorable perceptions of many of their colleagues throughout their first year, especially with those team members they worked closely with. Philip, for example, recounted this in his June Critical Dialogue:

I would say my colleagues are on the same page. I hope that I get to keep my grade level team, because we started really coming together and coming up with ideas towards the end. We're requesting specials at the same time so we can meet consistently every week.

And Claire expressed a similar sentiment:

What I've said for a long time about them is that I think that sometimes, they dig in around stuff. I think they dig in around the right stuff. They're really persistent around the right things. Is what your teaching relevant to students? How are you really empowering students to manage their own learning? What are you doing to set the culture of the classroom?

Likewise, Olivia said, "Oh. I really appreciate the other teachers there. They're very helpful. They're very friendly, they're very helpful." Tiffany, as well, said, "I would say that I like my team. I do like my team. I think that we come together. We actually have a very strong team compared to other teams in the building."

These positive perceptions of colleagues stand in contrast with occasional interactions – often unexpected and unsolicited – that didn't quite sit well with the teacher participants. Philip encountered unsolicited advice indirectly from a veteran teacher about his professional attire:

And in these cases, I do see this dominant male dynamic in particular. Johnson and Peters, older guys who've been there for a while, established, very much authoritative in their approach. (Johnson) has your typical view of the south side, not wanting to teach on the south side. It's racially motivated.

They both are very competent guys, but their energy is very different than mine, as far as what a teacher should be. They're very much like, "Discipline's the way to go. We need to be in control. This is how you control the kids. You are the authority figure.." that kind of idea.

And it's like, they only speak to me when they need to. Apparently, (a problem they have with me is) 'not wearing a tie on parent teacher conference day.' He (Johnson) made a comment as if I wasn't there.. to Ms. D....He turns to Ms. D, and says "At least I'm wearing a tie." I'm wearing a polo and pants, the Powers Staff Polo. And then of course this guy is like "At least I'm wearing a tie." It bothers me.

"Professionalism" is one of the ways that Kumashiro (2004) describes how common sense notions are transferred, an aspects of our society to which people feel pressure to conform, including "tradition, professionalism, morality, and normalcy". Mr. Johnson's indirect comments are an example of the pressure to conform to a commonsense notion of professional attire for men - a heteronormative, corporate representation of a tucked-in "dress" shirt and a tie. The irony, of course, is that Philip was

already trying to conform, wearing a different ‘uniform’ - a “polo” shirt with school name and insignia.

In terms of Critical Dialogue with experience colleagues, Mr. Johnson’s doesn’t even directly talk to

Philip, his novice colleague, choosing to speak about him in his presence. Another example of

unsolicited advice from a colleague came from the veteran teacher across the hall from Tiffany:

Even Ms. Calabrini. The other day, it was kind of funny. I came in after school and I was completely drained. And she was like, “Rough at the end of the day, huh?”

And I was like, “It’s always rough.”

I was gonna sit there and start bitching, and then she was like, “Well you know what you gotta do, and it’s the hardest thing cause you’re tired at the end of the day. You gotta put some wow and pizzazz in there, because they’re tired too. And if you’re losing them, it’s probably because you’re losing yourself at that moment. So you gotta try really hard to somehow hook them into things.”

It was interesting because, on the one hand I felt like she was being kind of critical of me, but in this supportive way. She was like, just remember it’s not them, it’s you. You have a lot of power in this, you can do a lot. I was like, ok. So, I took that to heart.

And then she told me, “no more coffee, eat a banana.” Everyday she’s telling me eat bananas.

There are a number of aspects of this piece of advice that are qualitatively different from the advice from Mr. Johnson toward Philip. For one, I think Ms. Calabrini’s encouragement to essentially remember that student engagement should first be linked to the teacher’s actions or inactions shows some critical understanding of the systemic ways that school creates the conditions for student disengagement.

It is a perspective similar to the one we ask teacher candidates to internalize when they instinctively externalize blame for student disengagement. I also appreciate that Calabrini appeared to have noticed that Tiffany was struggling, and decided to say something to her in that moment, rather than ignore it.

This represents at least the desire, on her part, to engage in something that is reminiscent of dialogue.

But there’s something about this exchange that - while perhaps friendlier than Mr. Johnson’s unsolicited advice - can also be similarly considered through the same lens of hegemonic socialization of new teachers - practices and perspectives that are “masked by or couched in concepts to which we often feel social pressure to conform” (Kumashiro, 2004).

On the one hand, Calabrini offers advice before listening or inquiring into what Tiffany meant when she said “It’s always rough.” One could argue that this decision could be attributed to wisdom;

Calabrini may have enough experience working with novices or may not have had the time to sit through the “bitching” Tiffany admits she was about to do. On the other hand, one could argue that the offering of advice is a silencing, banking approach. *I see you have a problem, so here’s a solution, end of story.*

This kind of banking-type exchange is not dialogic, and is a reflection of the way hierarchies can function in schools - from District to Administrator, Administrator to Teacher, Teacher to Student. In terms of criticality, Calabrini’s suggestion that Tiffany address student disengagement by using ‘hooks’ and ‘pizzazz,’²¹ can be seen as an example of the kind of behaviorist approach to student behavior that prioritizes teacher “strategies” that distract the issue at the surface, rather than challenge teachers to address the critical roots of the problem.

The teacher participants, not expecting or prepared for these interactions, found themselves in reactive postures, which likely inhibited their ability to respond in ways that reflected their critical dialogic beliefs and practices. In the next section, I consider times when the teacher participants were able to prepare for critical dialogue and took intentional action to initiate it with their more experienced colleagues.

Moving from Reacting to Initiating Critical Dialogue with Colleagues

As newcomers to their schools, the teacher participants knew to take steps to establish themselves as reliable, competent professional colleagues, which would help to set the context for potential Critical Dialogue. These early gestures were mostly informal; sometimes strategically organized and sometimes just part of the day-to-day life of working in a school. One of the simplest opportunities for informal dialogue and relationship building was having lunch together.

Claire: Yeah. We eat lunch together most days; I had some parent meetings over lunch, like parents just popped up and want to check in. I hadn’t had lunch with them (colleagues) for like three days, and they were like, "Where have you been?"

Bill: That's great.

²¹ One of the 49 strategies found in Lemov (2010) is actually called “Vegas,” as in “you gotta put a little Vegas into your teaching”.

Claire: It's just like a really nice informal way to just talking about different kids or whatever; it's just really helpful.

Bill: Collaborative problem solving.

Claire: Yeah and the intention is not always, okay we're going to sit down and discuss X, Y, Z issues. It's just more about ... That's when I think about all this stuff (pointing to the December Critical Dialogue Starter) it's like we probably talked about the majority of these things. We sit down and we basically talk about everything that's going on during lunch. Whether or not there's stuff in the school that's annoying or big, but we're really on the same page around a lot of stuff, which is good.

Claire's initial steps toward her colleagues led not only to stronger relationships and collaboration, but also new learning for her and her dialogue partners, all experienced older, Black men and women; learning that otherwise might not have been accessible to her as a new teacher. Lunches like these were spaces to talk about what was going on in the school, but also an opportunity to try to make sense of the world outside of the school, in this case some of the significant racial justice events going on in the city.

Another way participants built early relationships with colleagues was through collaborative planning. Tiffany built a strong relationship with an experienced teacher on her grade level team, a fellow Latina who knew the students and some of the subtle politics in the school.

Yeah, when I think back, I feel like people were just busy trying to get their classrooms together, and get their things figured out. And now that that's sort of coming together more for other teachers, we're starting to think about where we intersect. I like Ms. Diaz, she and I sit down and plan on Fridays. We go over stuff and talk a lot about the students that we share. So I love that relationship.

Tiffany was also colleagues with Elena, a fellow first year teacher, and one of her classmates from UTEP. Elena taught 7th and 8th grade Science, just upstairs from Tiffany's 5th and 6th grade math classroom. Already good friends in the program, Tiffany and Elena were in Critical Dialogue constantly throughout the year, using that process to support one another:

Elena and I always talk about the actual institution of school a lot, and how messed up it is at times. We've been talking a lot about special education services. Obviously CPS is not doing so well, and how that's just impacting our school, and also how that's impacting our classrooms and our students. You're like, "Oh my god, this is how it happens."

Yeah. And I think... a big barrier, and something I thought about a lot...since I know that some of the parents speak only Spanish. I think that's a really big one. So I've enlisted Elena's help in calling. And so that's been helpful. But I definitely find that it's harder for me to call parents, especially if I don't have anyone there to translate for me. Cause then I feel like, I know enough to be able to say what happened, but not necessarily enough to enter into that dialogue, not fluently. So, yeah, that's been something.

Critical Dialogues with partners like Ms. Diaz and Elena were a space for sense-making, planning, reflection, and support. Both Ms. Diaz and Elena helped supplement Tiffany's practice (lesson planning and translation, respectively), which points to the power and importance of intentional professional relationship building for novice teachers.

Challenging Hegemonic Approaches to Classroom Instruction

In the "In the Classroom" chapter, I looked at the ways that the teacher participants attempted to bring a curricular standpoint lens to the formal curriculum they planned and taught their middle school students. Each teacher participant navigated the tension between the expected curriculum and what they aspired to teach. I was similarly curious about the ways that the teacher participants perceived their colleagues approaches to instruction, most especially when the instruction of their colleagues had a direct effect on their work. We considered whether their colleagues embraced or were skeptical of a social justice approach to teaching, and how and when their colleagues attempted to socialize them into common sense, traditional approaches.

One particular example that stood out was a series of interactions between Philip and Ms. Barr, a veteran, White music teacher at Powers²². In September and October, Ms. Barr prepared Philip's class and the two other sixth grades for her annual student production of a Thanksgiving celebration between American Indians and White European colonists. A thirty-year "tradition" at Powers, this play involved stereotypical costumes of both groups and an uncritical, historically inaccurate portrayal. On it's own, this was a clear example of a hegemonic curriculum accepted as commonsense for years. But Ms. Barr

²² Unfortunately, a good chunk of this story was relayed in conversations that took place outside of the critical dialogues. I summarized those conversations in my field notes and drew on them in the summary included here. The dialogue that is presented here comes from the June critical dialogue; I recognized during the research that this story was one I wanted to spotlight, so I prompted Philip to retell what stood out to him about that event from earlier in the year.

took the further step of assigning roles based on racial stereotypes, with some of the newcomer Eastern European White students portraying colonists and the many newcomer students from Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southern Asia portraying the Native Americans – children from India dressing as American Indians. In addition, Ms. Barr deemed Philip's class to be the most compliant during Music class, and so 'rewarded' them with the speaking roles, and punished the other two sixth grades with no speaking parts.

Philip: Yeah, after talking with Ms. Barr, the music teacher, about Thanksgiving and the play, and how all the roles were essentially were given to my classroom because they were the most functional-

Bill: By her definition.

Philip: By her definition, yes, which pissed me off because I even mentioned that to the admin. I said, "What message does that send to the other two classes? That's not right. Why does my class get all the speaking roles?"

It's worth noting that this Thanksgiving play was cancelled and not performed for the first time in the history of Powers, and Philip had a hand in having it cancelled. In the above dialogue, he notes that he raised the unfairness of the speaking roles to the administration, but in an unrecorded conversation, he noted that he also informed the administration about the racist content of the play.

Philip: (and then)What else she said about American values, (was) where I sort of challenged her, but (felt like I) couldn't, (speak to her) like, "Let me tell you." (Instead) It was like, "Well, actually, you know, there's a different side to that." I don't need to get into details right now, but there are two sides to that. I remember her being like, "You know, this is America." "This is the watering-down of American values." "We were here first." (to which I responded) "No, no. No, we weren't. Sorry." Factually, this is what happened.

Bill: What was watering down the American values in her mind?

Philip: That they couldn't do a Thanksgiving Play anymore. But I still remember that interaction, and we didn't really talk much after that. You know what I mean? At least not as consistently as we were in the beginning. I think in the beginning she was trying to find a friend in me.

Bill: Right.

Philip: But she does that and then has people do things for her. You know? Or she'll ask for favors.
So we didn't really talk.

The direct conversation between Philip and Ms. Barr, as he retells it, give us a few examples of how a first year teacher attempted a critical dialogue with a veteran teacher about decolonizing a curriculum. Philip did not stay silent when Ms. Barr asserted her incorrect, uncritical stance on colonial history - "We were here first." He disagreed with her assumptions and offered that there are 'two sides.'

Philip also chose to not let himself be included in her assertion that "we" are in agreement. That particular statement was a clear example of the way whiteness works in hegemonic socialization; when Ms. Barr says "we" to Philip - as in "we were here first," she is using her power as an experience colleague but also asserting a white supremacy ideology that he is expected to comply with; instead, Philip resists this assumption of association, and speaks against it.

Philip also points out how he understands Ms. Barr's attempt to befriend him may have been self-serving ("She has people do things for her... she'll ask for favors"). It appears that when Philip challenges her attempts at hegemonic socialization, and offers his own version of critical dialogue instead, she no longer sees him as an ally. This may be one of the costs of new teachers engaging in critical dialogue with experience colleagues or any other adult whose views may be rooted in hegemonic ideologies.

Another example from Claire's experience engaging experience colleagues in critical dialogue was about differences in pedagogy. Claire's relationship with her grade level partner Angela, a veteran Black woman, predates this project; Angela was Claire's student teaching mentor the previous year, and Angela was instrumental in getting Claire hired at Jones as a first year teacher. There was already a high level of trust and respect between them, even though they did not always share a stance or vision. In this retelling of a critical dialogue between them, Claire was excited about introducing more independent learning and inquiry for next year, and noting that Angela was not.

Claire: She's really scared of that. She's scared that with my class of seventh graders as her

homeroom next year. She's like "the sixth graders already know how to do that. I don't know why, but they do. Why don't we start with seventh grade next year?" I was like 'I think the group that we have this year in seventh grade, that could actually be extremely beneficial for them in a lot of ways. Why wouldn't we include them?'

Bill: Right. Her instinct is to want to do more structured whole group work (with the 7th-going-into-8th grade)? Is that right? Which I think is a reflection of, not necessarily her values, but the values of the system, right? That students who are lower performing, who don't have the kind of independence skills necessarily to be trusted, if you will, to do that work need concrete, whole group instruction. That's a pedagogical belief that is practiced very commonly in schools. Especially urban schools.

And The idea of IB and the notion of independence is a philosophy that tends to be reserved for kids with more privilege. That's a pedagogy that tends to be - if we think about - Remember the reading that we did very early on in field work. I can't remember the author's name but it looks at the economic structure, the curriculum...

Claire: The Anyon reading?

Bill: Yes, the Jean Anyon reading. Very good. That was the analysis. Right?

Claire: Right.

Bill: (Jones) already has IB status, which in some circles is thought of as a more privileged curriculum. Angela's instinct to put on the brakes is an understandable one.. (but) I think you're saying that this is the right move to make. Right? That kids who are at Jones, they deserve this too and they can handle this as well. Right?

Claire: That it's actually going to be more beneficial to them because school was never set up for them in the first place

Bill: Does Angela ... When she expresses trepidation about this approach ... Does she not believe in the kids at Smith?

Claire: I don't think so. I don't think that is true for her. I think that she has the experience of wearing a lot of hats, and I think her trepidation is about whether or not it's going to translate into "do we get to stay at our school ... Does our school get to stay open"?

Bill: Right. She's a pragmatist.

Claire: She's very pragmatic. Angela is very well aware (that school 'success' is) a moving target, and she's like, "I don't understand why Dr. Stevens's trying to jump through all these hoops when the hoops are constantly changing, and they already know if they're going to close our school or not. It has nothing to do with the gains we make

on the tests, because if we make the gains on the tests, then they're going to say it's about something else. If we get the culture in the cafeteria to what's acceptable, then there's going to be an issue somewhere else with what we're doing. The perception about who we are as a school I already there and that's not going to change.” (3:17)

I think that if we can nail down some of those structures that allow more independence, then I think that makes the case for how we can actually transition into doing more personalized learning next year. I want to prove to Angela that it's something that we can do and have high quality products. It's not going to be just a bunch of kids doing nothing or trying to do something at the last minute.

This retelling shows that Claire’s critical dialogic stance toward students, pedagogy, and curriculum is driven by the desire to promote a pedagogy that is often denied to kids of color, connecting her reflection to curriculum theory (Anyon,1980). She is committed to taking action, conceptualizing concrete steps (*“nail down some of those structures that allow...”*). This critical reflection, using theory and moving toward action is a strong example of her praxis at work in our Critical Dialogue.

Her approach with her colleague provides a model, like Philip, of how the teacher participants were able to use a critical dialogue approach to start to challenge and change practices of their colleagues; rather than run roughshod over her colleague who does not share her belief, she takes a humanizing stance toward Angela, trying to examine the roots of why she believes what she believes. And she ends with a stance that leaves room for disagreement, but is still resolute to demonstrate the benefits of her approach (*“I want to prove to Angela that...”*).

Challenging Hegemonic Approaches to Student Behavior

Another question that arose for the teacher participants had to do with the ways that their experienced colleagues viewed their approach to a dialogic Critical Care toward students and their classroom communities. We considered, as we did with the approach to instruction, whether their colleagues were supportive of this approach, or if they would bring more traditional, hegemonic beliefs toward control and punishment of children. We also wondered how the colleagues would transmit these beliefs – through a critical dialogue, or through more hierarchical methods of encouraging compliance.

Philip recounted an example of an unexpected moment brought on by his experience colleague, the 8th grade math teacher.

Philip: Yeah, and there's pretty much how she (the 8th grade math teacher) is, she does what she does, she gets test scores. She's very much like, don't fuck with her, and she makes that very clear with the students. In some ways I think she's mean. . It works for her. It doesn't work for me.

Bill: Right.

Philip: Even the other day, she came down, she brought six or seven eighth graders, in my classroom, in the middle. We were doing some pre-assessment. It was nice and quiet, classical music playing, they were doing a pre-assessment. She comes in, she says, 'Sorry to interrupt the mood here but do you mind if I just have a minute with your kids?'. I'm like, 'Yeah, all right.'. She's like, 'I'm going to mess up the mood though, I'm sorry. 'All right. You know, just go with it, whatever.' She's like, 'All right, who in here knows what a reciprocal is?'. She's like, 'Okay, you two go by that kid. You three go by that kid. You go by that kid. You go by that kid. You go by that kid. I want you to tell them what a reciprocal is.'. It was like

Bill: - These are the six 8th grade kids that didn't know what a reciprocal was?

Philip: - that didn't know what a reciprocal was.

Bill: And she's like, 'You should have learned that shit in sixth grade?'.

Philip: Exactly, she's like, 'Let this be a lesson to everybody. By the time you get to eighth grade, you need to know what a reciprocal is. You've got two years.', 'Actually you've got one year.'.

Bill: That sounds terrible.

Philip: I'm sitting there. I'm like, 'Everybody's should have their hand up, you know what a reciprocal is.' ... you made me look like an idiot.'

Bill: Well....She was trying to make her kids look like idiots.

Philip: Exactly, that was her goal -

Bill: - and she achieved it.

Philip: Exactly, if that's how you do it, then that's how you do it. I don't necessarily agree with it, but what's unfortunate is that it does work as far as getting the kids to listen to what you have to say, but it's out of fear

It must be challenging for novice teachers to witness dehumanizing acts toward kids, especially when those acts are perpetrated by a more senior colleague. At the heart of this elaborate demonstration

by the 8th grade math teacher is the belief that humiliation and shame are motivators for improvement. Similarly, the teacher is implying that the shamed students shortcomings were because of their individual failings; there is no critical analysis or understanding on display here.

This is an example of hegemonic socialization by a veteran colleague toward a novice teacher in a number of ways. The presumption by the 8th grade math teacher that, even though this might “mess up the mood,” it was somehow within the boundary of acceptable professional practice to come into Philip’s classroom unannounced and engage in this practice is evidence that this sort of treatment of students is a common sense professional norm at Powers. Philip happens to be the 6th grade math teacher, the teacher responsible for teaching reciprocals, so it’s possible that the 8th grade teacher might have walked into this classroom, no matter who was teaching. And I would further speculate that Philip’s novice status is relevant, and that some aspect of this move is meant to be pedagogical toward Philip, not just the students. She may be implying something about how Philip’s approach - if she’s heard about it - is wrong, and that he should take her approach as a reminder of how one should treat students.

Philip, in his retelling of this incident, reveals how this socialization can be internalized; in the classroom, he recalls how he was, at first, angry at his own kids for not knowing a reciprocal. Philip was thinking at the time (and then retells it, to me) - “you made me look like an idiot” for not raising their hands. Now, it’s possible the 6th graders didn’t raise their hand because they were terrified, not because they didn’t know the answer, this being possibly their first glimpse at their future math teacher in 2 years. Regardless, I think this is another example of the way that hegemonic socialization functions by dividing, and then encouraging compliance on one side of that division. Like in the story with Ms. Cox, Philip appears to feel compelled to choose between being on the side of his kids at that moment or on the side of the adult; in this case, his first instinct is to be angry at his kids.

If we juxtapose that initial reaction that Philip had (and then recounted) in the moment, in the classroom with his critical reflection on that moment weeks later in our Critical Dialogue, we see another side. In reflection on the incident, he says (about the 8th grade teacher’s approach) *“If that’s how you do it, then that’s how you do it. I don’t necessarily agree with it...”* Here, Philip seems to reaffirm his own

original Critical Dialogic stance of care, separating himself from the 8th grade teacher. I argue that this is an important step in the process of resisting hegemonic socialization; through critical reflection, Philip recognizes that moment, and sees the dissonance between the stance of his colleague and his own more critical stance in a new light. And as a result, he declares to himself - and to me - that he does not buy into her approach.

Olivia tells another example of this phenomenon – a clash between a teacher participant and an experienced colleague about the approach to care with students. As you may recall from Chapter 4, Olivia’s AUSL-trained grade level partner Tracy was someone she disagreed with about sweaters in the classroom and other schoolwide policies. Olivia talked about how in the beginning of the year, Tracy informally appointed herself as an informal, quasi mentor role based on the fact that Tracy had been on this grade level team the year before, which was the first year of AUSL’s turn-around of Clifton, and wanted Olivia to join with her in breaking the culture of “Old Clifton” in favor of the new, turnaround approach.

- Olivia: My grade level partner, she went through the AUSL residency, so she eats, sleeps, lives, breathes AUSL ...she's super strict. She's the stickler
- Bill: Are you guys talking about students or about- We talk a lot about dialogue here. Are you guys dialoguing?
- Olivia: Yeah, we talk a lot. I like her alot. We talk a lot. We just don't do the same things in the classroom.
- Bill: Does she seem okay with that? Does she wish, do you think, that you were more like her?
- Olivia: She told me earlier in the school year that I need to yell at them and be meaner. Once I did, out of frustration. Afterwards, I didn't think anything of it, because it was over. I was just frustrated and then it was over, and then I had actually forgotten about it.
Then she came up to me later like, "Yeah, I saw that. That was great," but I didn't feel great about that at all. I don't like raising my voice, I don't like getting frustrated like that, and having that come out.

This kind of unsolicited from a more experienced colleague - “be meaner” “yell at them” – followed by validation afterwards when the new teacher takes that advice is another example of the kind

of hegemonic socialization the teacher participants faced in their first year. Like Philip previously, Olivia uses critical reflection in our Critical Dialogic Partnership to reaffirm for herself that she does not want to practice this version of control with her students. However, Olivia's rejection of Tracy's approach to being meaner is complicated by some of the approaches to care that she does admire in Tracy.

Olivia: Yeah, she's coached teams outside of school and after school, she takes some of them home. She will take them to college and high school fairs. I don't do any of that. And she never seems to need a break from them. That's another thing about Tracy, she knows her parents really well. Every report card picked up, she always gets a prize for having the most parents show. I feel like part of that might be because they're 8th graders and they have a lot of stuff coming up, but I think a lot of it is she has really good relationships with them. She knows her parents really well. I'm envious of that.

Bill: Why does she have good relationships with them, compared to you? Let's just compare you to her for a second.

Olivia: She talks to them way more. That's definitely something that I've gotten better at, but it's still not where I'd like it to be. She texts them all the time.

A humanizing critical analysis of Tracy, as an urban teacher, allows us to criticize her oppressive approaches to classroom and individual student behavior management while also praising and putting forward as exemplars the ways that teachers can build Critical Caring relationships with individual students and families. Tracy in these most recently shared examples, provides a model of how teachers (white and of color) can enact othermothering approaches with Black students and families, and demonstrate a level of cultural competence and respect. But while there are examples of a critical care in her practice, when Olivia considered those against the other approaches Tracy has, she is less conflicted.

This kid said she (Tracy) choked him. Coincidentally, it's one of the kids that hangs out with me a lot, but she said, he said, that she pulled him up against the wall and choked him....if she needs to physically remove a student, she'll just do it.... she pinned him against ... I don't think she really choked him, but she pinned him up against the wall, and they were about to fight each other. He told the principal that she choked him, and then the principal had to do this investigation, and the teacher is going to have to take a leave of absence.

Olivia tried to make sense of the cognitive dissonance between the ways she saw practices of Tracy that she was envious of and ones that were clearly in opposition to her approach:

She's very emotionally charged.. I don't get that emotionally charged. She just gets really really emotional, and it comes out in her management. Not to say that I'm not emotionally involved but she gets ... It gets the better of her. Why are you throwing shit? Why are you breaking your stuff? The kids already villainize her especially my 7th graders, they hate her. I don't really know why they don't like her at all. Honestly it's probably because I let them get away with way more.

In her reflection, I see some of the same internalization that Philip expressed after being witness to the 8th grade math teacher's similarly dehumanizing approach to students. Olivia sees the kids' hatred toward Tracy as somehow her fault for not being as strict, which communicates, to me, a pressure to conform.

Experienced colleagues can be incredibly helpful to new teachers, orienting them to the profession of teaching and welcoming them into a community of practice that enriches the experiences of everyone involved. At the same time, experienced colleagues can be some of the strongest transmitters of common sense hegemonic socialization, pressuring new teacher to conform to practices that go against their critical and dialogic preparation. The teacher participants saw some of both of these aspects in their attempts to engage their experienced colleagues in Critical Dialogue during their first year of teaching, even challenging those colleagues to rethink their positions on instruction and care toward kids. next section, I look at the ways this same phenomenon occurred with Administrators.

Critical Dialogue with Administrators

The teacher participants, despite their open and willing Critical Dialogic Stance toward their Administrators, often struggled to engage in Critical Dialogue with their Principal and other administrators during their first year of teaching in CPS. During their residency experience at UTEP, some of the teacher participants worked with Administrators who considered themselves to be in solidarity with their teachers, parents and community members. The participants had opportunities to observe some of the challenges that CPS Administrators faced, including scrutiny from Network Administrators, laborious and time-consuming evaluation responsibilities, limited resources from district-choked budgets, and the constant challenge of trying to meet the complex needs of many different groups of stakeholders. These are many of the same challenges that Principals listed upon resignation in 2015-

16, which saw nearly 50 decide to leave - the highest number yet under Mayor Rahm Emmanuel (Fitzpatrick, 2016a).

Still, the teacher participants each believed that the Administration at the school where they'd been hired could be potential partners in Critical Dialogue, and they positioned themselves to be ready to listen to initial directives and remain open to unsolicited advice, while staying critically rooted in their own values. But almost immediately, they all felt a shift, which they reflected on during early Critical Dialogues in our Partnership.

And I feel like when I see admin I'm like "oh god, no. Don't catch something wrong." (Tiffany)

It seems more like a 'Gotcha' than anything else, or like, 'I want to let you know that I'm watching you.'I don't like the feeling that surrounds it (Philip)

Our network chief and another lady, I'm not even sure what she does, but she's the principal's boss' ... The principal's boss and then that boss' boss were supposed to be doing walks of the rooms today. They told us that on Friday. I don't think I was the only one who had a really awful weekend just thinking about that all weekend.

It's driving me crazy, it's making me frantic. I keep trying to tell myself I don't really care... but I care. I had a headache dealing with it and just thinking about when they were going to come and counting the minutes and it was the most nerve-wracking thing I have ever. (Olivia)

With few intentional structures that helped create mentorship opportunities or informal opportunities to engage in relationship building with their administrators, the teacher participants had to look to alternative methods of initiating and engaging in Critical Dialogue.

The Role of Administrator Evaluation

The fear of being caught doing something wrong that the teacher participants experienced seemed to be rooted in part in their perceptions that the Principal of the school was occupied by and mostly concerned with teacher evaluation. In many cases the only interactions between the teacher participants and their Administrators during the year were during the REACH²³ evaluation process. A relationship

²³ Based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, REACH Students (Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago (REACH) Students) includes 4 observations a year, each with a three step process of pre-evaluation meeting, a classroom observation, and a post-observation debrief. The three highest scores from those observations makes up 70% of a teacher's "performance" and the other 30% is from Schoolwide Value Added

based entirely around one partner evaluating the other partner (and then potentially using those evaluations to fire the partner) makes Critical Dialogue very challenging, for obvious reasons.

Yet in some cases, the teacher participants found opportunity for Critical Dialogue during those required evaluation conversations, in part because they were dedicated moments in the year where the two parties were required to sit and discuss the teacher participants' teaching practice. In at least one of Philip's observations, some Critical Dialogue took place.

Philip: The REACH observation is interesting; I didn't expect him (the Principal) to come in at that time. I wasn't prepared for him. I should have been, but I wasn't. He caught me in the middle of a conversation with the kids. I had moved a pile of papers or something and I forgot it. (and the kids said) 'Mr. Dennis, you do that a lot.' 'Why do you do that?' (And I replied,) "Alright, well, you know this is ADD or whatever." In the middle of that conversation is when he came in for my REACH evaluation.

Bill: So you were explaining to the kids what ADD was (while your principal was conducting your REACH observation)?

Philip: Yeah, and how it shows up for me, and he came in on the last five minutes or so. And actually I think it helped improve my score. Because he gave me 'establishing an environment of respect and rapport and understanding' or whatever. So he appreciated the conversation, I was honest with him. He said, 'you know, I sympathize. I can see that going two ways. One, where they want to sidetrack you all the time and use that, or the other way where they can develop some understanding and they appreciate that a little bit more.' I said, 'Yeah, you probably get a little bit of both in sixth grade,' and I see that. I see the tangent questions coming. I'm like, 'no stop, blinders, blinders, focus, this is what we're doing.' So that was interesting. I've got some notes from him too, more sentence stems and things that I can use for, 'okay this is how I want you to engage in the thing and this is what you should be thinking about, you know, turn and talk with your neighbor' So I've been doing a lot more turn and talks.....I think that's paid off.

Arguably some sort of dialogic process went on here; two educators - one novice, one more experienced - discussed the novice's practice, and brainstormed improvements and next steps. In reflecting on this dialogue, Philip saw the ways that this exchange was generative for him, and how it helped him diversify his approach to engaging students. The principal demonstrated some level of care

Student scores. The VAM score portion will be eliminated moving forward, a concession one by CTU in the contract settlement reached in October, 2016.

("I sympathize") about Philip and his challenges. And there appeared to be some sort of shared belief that a teachers' vulnerability and transparency about his struggles (e.g. Philip's comfortable admission of his ADD struggles) can be a powerful learning opportunity for kids and an example of a critical teaching practice.

But because this was an evaluation that had high stakes for Philip, whose status at the school hinged on the perceptions of his Principal in those few moments, it is hard to know, for example, whether the Principal's analysis ("*I can see that going two ways*") or the 'sentence stems' he sent to Philip afterwards, were examples of problem posing co-construction or directives that required compliance. In the end, it appears that Philip appreciated the conversation and found it helpful.

Olivia, on the other hand, perceived her evaluation process to be about proving a willingness to comply with the requests of her Administration. Her Principal carried out the formal REACH evaluation for Olivia, but her AUSL coach also conducted observations that felt evaluative and high stakes.

Olivia: I have an AUSL coach, she's coming tomorrow, and she's going to be looking to see if kids are chewing gum. And they will be, because I don't enforce it. She's going to be looking to see if kids still have their sweaters on. They probably will because.. I don't see it. It's nerve wracking, because when she sees that kind of stuff, she thinks I'm regressing or not listening to what she's saying, or wondering if this is the right place for me. There's so much judgment.

Bill: On the one hand you're kind of playing the game, and on the other hand, you're kind of resisting the game. Which is what the kids do too. There's this critical thinking piece that you're doing (with her kids, about the rules, themselves)) that doesn't feel like the AUSL folks are doing. They're not having that critical conversation where they're like, "These rules are kind of bullshit, but they're kind of important too." You can't ...

Olivia: I'm so scared about what's going to ...

Bill: Really?

Olivia: Yeah, I'm terrified.

Bill: That's interesting. Has that (your feeling toward the AUSL coach) shifted about her?

Olivia: Well I'm trying really hard, and I don't like ... because the last time she came in and things were a little crazy. She said when we met after, she was just like ... I don't

remember exactly what she said, and it wasn't this blunt, but what she was saying was that, "You're not listening to what I was saying, and you didn't take my advice, and you're regressing." She didn't say it like that, but that's what she meant. I'm so scared that she's going to be like, "What happened? Things fell apart. What's going on?" I don't know.

I don't have access to the AUSL coach's thoughts, and I won't speculate about what she's thinking, but one of the ways I interpret Olivia's critical reflection on this experience is that a socializing message that administrators transmit to teachers is that a teacher's demonstration, in response to a directive, is a reflection of that teacher's effectiveness. In other words, if a teacher does what an Administrator asks them to do, they are successfully improving. If they do not, they are 'regressing' as a teacher. By prioritizing measurement against a standard - a standard that reflects the beliefs and cultures of the hegemony - and using a supposedly 'validated' 'objective' instrument to measure that standard, the measurer can determine if the measured is more or less successful. Critical perspectives on schooling have shown how this process has historically been used to sort students, but this is applicable to the sorting teachers, here, as well.

This evaluation process is not dialogical; those being measured are not given an opportunity to determine what is valued, nor what constitutes value in the process. In some cases, there is little to no consideration of their agency in the situation, no way of giving voice to why a certain practice was enacted, for example. In this specific example, Olivia's beliefs about classroom culture are not valued, nor is her agency acknowledged; it is only through her Critical Dialogue with me that we know why she's chosen not to enforce the rule against kids wearing sweaters. It doesn't appear that she's been invited or been able to have a dialogue about these choices with the Administrator/Evaluator.

Finally - and hopefully appropriately in this space - I want to acknowledge a frustrating aspect of being party, as a critical dialogue partner, to hegemonic socialization of teachers. As a researcher and supporter of new teachers, I find it infuriating to see this type of malpractice enacted on novices by under-qualified administrators holding so much professional power. I would argue that Olivia is an ideal teacher for this school; as someone who grew up in this neighborhood, her social location reflects the culture and

experience of the kids at Clifton, and she is a trained teacher who has rich experiences that make her qualified to have an opinion about what's best for her own kids. The idea that her teaching ability might be viewed as 'regressing' because she doesn't follow a directive demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding about teacher education and development, or masks an compliance-driven agenda with faux-scientific objectivity. The idea that her coach or her administrator is the sole determiner of whether Olivia can or cannot work there is insane.

Strategic Collaboration with Colleagues as a path to Critical Dialogue with Administrators

One way the teacher participants alleviated their fears and found ways to work productively with administration was to leverage the positive relationships built with their more experienced colleagues.. These collegial relationships helped the teacher participants feel they were part of a team when they needed to interact with the Administration:

Tiffany: Yeah. I'd feel scared as hell going to the admin if I were the only one. I would.

Bill: You don't feel that, because you feel like you're part of a team?

Tiffany: I do feel like I'm part of the team. If there were an issue I'd be the first one to go. It depends on what it is really. If it's a scheduling issue I feel like I should let somebody who's been there longer. If we all feel the same way. I say that knowing that if we do feel that way, I think our team would probably go and say something to them. I also don't even know where do you enter into these conversations? How?
I also feel like our admin is a set up. The dynamics between staff and themselves, such that we're supposed to take care of everything. They're like, "You guys have all the power. You take care of it" but there's no support coming on the other end, or there's also mixed messages in terms of like, "Yeah, you guys take care of it. This is the goal." The goal is always changing. I don't know.

Bill: It feels very confusing.

Tiffany: It does feel very confusing.

Claire expressed a similar feeling in one of our Dialogues:

Claire: I feel so lucky. It's like I'm really tired, I work really hard, and we're constantly being asked to do more..... If I didn't have other people to be like, "Yeah we're all there."

Bill: ...there is ...a level of exhaustion that you're not experiencing because you don't have to fight with the people closest to you to do the things that you want to do?

Claire: Right. We actually take turns bringing stuff up to administration and we're like, "Whose turn is it? They're like (to me) , "We're going to give you a pass because you're new, but you won't get a pass after next year."

Collaboration between the teacher participants and their experienced colleagues and administrators gives us a glimpse of how problems in schools can get solved and issues can get addressed in ways that are beneficial for everyone. In the following example, Claire builds from the critical dialogic partnerships she had already established with her experienced teacher colleagues to engage administrators in a problem solving process.

Bill: How did the block (schedule) thing come about?

Claire: There was a conversation about, "Hey, we're going to shift the prep periods so that we can give specials more time, because IB says that they should be equal."
At the same time, I think Mr. Richards was out a few days for training. We have a variety of ways we shift our schedule when there are three of us managing our kids instead of all four of us and it depends on who's out and how the shifts happen. I had two or three days in a row where I only had two classes in the afternoon period.

Claire: I went home and I felt more relaxed and I feel like even though having double the kids in 6th grade presented its own set of challenges, I was just kind of reflecting on the level of conversation, the level of work kids were able to get done and I came in the next morning and I said to Angela, "Hey, do you think this is something we could do? Would you mind?" She was like, "No, because there would be days I wouldn't have 8th grade until forever, because that would be nice because they're a hard class."

I asked the rest of the team about it, "Hey, this is something that's working that Angela and I started talking about. How would that work for you Miss Crandle?" is this something we can get on board as a team?

Having those conversations and knowing that we're a strong enough team and that we're communicating all the time about the different things that we need to make sure happen, that it was easy enough to say, okay, yeah we could make this shift and not make it be detrimental to kids in the way it has been previously, which is why they moved away from it.

Bill: Trust.

Claire: Trust. You know what I mean?
Then, I went and I presented it to Miss Finetta (the AP) and said, "Hey, we had this

conversation and everyone on my team is on board. I feel like this would make me a better teacher. I feel like this would be better for students, especially for 8th grade. Their transitions are really hard for them and I'm really bad at transitioning them. If we cut out some of those transitions, they're actually going to be doing more work.

She was like, "I want a schedule that works for my teachers, and if you guys can manage it, make it happen." Then we were like, well, let's start it, you know?

Claire's reflection points to the ways that she used Critical Dialogue during these specific negotiations to make positive change for her and for the school. First, her use of Critical Dialogue to build trusting relationships prior to this moment likely had an effect on her ability to even begin this process described here. Then she used other critical dialogue practices to create more buy in with administrators, include positioning herself horizontally with individuals, asking questions, and putting kids of color at the center of her justification for why these shifts make sense. A story like this, I believe, supports the notion that new teachers can and should see themselves as capable of using Critical Dialogue practices to influence and push to make schools more critical and dialogic. Claire is the individual with arguably the least amount of power in the situation, yet she catalyzed the process.

Claire later recounts how she realized she wanted the students to feel included in the process after she and the other teachers and administrators had already begun to work on the schedule shift. Though the students were included mid-way through the process, and not at the very start, it was still a learning moment for the students to see themselves as agents in the change process.

Claire: Then when I presented it to the kids, I asked a couple of my 8th graders, "Hey, we're kind of thinking about this. What do you think about this situation?" They were all like, "Yeah, absolutely. We need the 90 minute blocks instead of the 45 minute blocks." I presented it to the (rest of the kids, saying) "we (me and some of the 8th graders) were talking about it and we had this idea, then I talked to my team about it and I talked to administration, and so this is what we're going to do"...that wasn't the order of how things happened.

Bill: So you manipulated the story slightly, to make it more that way, but you weren't misleading them. Essentially, that's what happened, right?

Claire: Right

Bill: Which is powerful. It's a good concrete example of what you're trying to say (through your curriculum), how do you make change in the world?

Claire: Yeah.

Bill: We often talk about how Social Justice curriculum in the world can be modeled, practiced first in the school space, right? Addressing grievances in the school is a way to practice addressing grievances out in the world.

In the previous chapter, I pointed to how Claire's critical approach to instruction made intentional links between historical and contemporary movements for justice, building from the funds of knowledge that students were bringing with them to school in order to make strong connections to the past. In this snippet of the Critical Dialogue between us, I suggested to Claire that the inclusion of her students - even at the stage where she includes them - was another way that teachers help students see themselves as subjects in their own experience. The rearrangement of 45 minute classes into 90 minute blocks is hardly on par with the Freedom Riders or the resistance to police brutality organizing in Chicago happening outside of Jones, but it was an authentic opportunity for students to practice collaboration with adults in a school to make change. Linking that small experience to broader historical movements helped kids and teachers see their learning as more than just a banking, transactional process.

Broken Dialogue with Administrators

The previous examples in this chapter show how teacher participants were able to find ways - either through dialogue about their REACH evaluation or through strategic partnering with like-minded colleagues - to successfully engage their Administrators. Tiffany's experience trying to engage her Administrator is one I describe to be a "broken dialogue," a series of attempts that became increasingly frustrating for her. Ultimately, Tiffany's Principal "terminated" her before the end of her first year was over. Tiffany was told, not by the principal, but by CPS the official reason for why her position was terminated - allegedly failing to report her absences according to the standard protocol. But she was left unclear about the actual reason, in part because no one would engage her in a dialogue about why, and

due to her temporary TAT (novice) status in the system, she had little recourse to require anyone to tell her more.

Tiffany's critical reflection about her experience centered on her struggle to build a relationship with her administrator. Her first realization that she and her Principal were not understanding one another came right in the beginning of school, when she became aware that she didn't yet have key documents and information that was needed for the start of school:

Elena (Tiffany's colleague and former classmate at UTEP) and I... go knock on Thatcher's (the principal) door and ask her to sit down and talk to us. That was the first time we got, "This is what the schedule looks like. These are the preps that they have. This is the amount of time." I feel like that should have been a red flag.

Also...I remember we didn't get our student lists until I think it was Friday before school started, which is okay, they're not finalized, butI don't think it was because they didn't want to give an incomplete list. I think it was just because they weren't organized enough to have all that stuff ready.

The function of schools is reliant on communication and systems, but from Tiffany's perspective, these aspects of the principal's responsibility never improved. School operations was frequently a topic of our Critical Dialogues; here is another example, in February, midway through the year:

Yeah. I got really upset because they held the NWEA tests until after Winter break. They botched that schedule.If it's so important that everyone test in this tiny little frame, then why send the schedule out literally 12 hours before it starts? She left a class off (so) I emailed and was like, "When does this class test? I don't see them on the schedule." She's like, "They're testing tomorrow." I'm like, "When are they testing tomorrow because they're not on the schedule?" ..why can't you just be like yeah go ahead and test? I don't know. Those are some things that are really frustrating about this place.

This wasn't Tiffany's opinion alone amongst her fellow teachers. Earlier in the chapter, Claire reflected on a time she was able to work with her more experienced colleagues and her administrators to problem solve effectively and respectfully. Tiffany and her colleagues did not feel they had the same capability.

Bill: Who did you turn to in those circumstances?

Tiffany: I talked to Calabrini a little bit. I felt like it was just difficult to get any answers because no one knew. I remember talking to another 5th grade teacher, Ramirez, the

bilingual teacher there, and we're like, "Oh, we should start some sort of email thing.. Then, Thatcher (the Principal) just got mad at Ramirez because she was the one that had to rearrange things I guess. I remember Ramirez being really upset and sad that Thatcher had chewed her out

Stymied attempts at Critical Dialogue around institutional logistics like testing schedules are certainly challenging for novice teachers, who likely are already struggling with their own direct classroom responsibilities. But some might argue that this is simply a professional norm to be expected in a hierarchical institution, a phenomenon that actors who are lower on the hierarchy must simply endure and navigate. But I would argue that the absence of a foundation of Critical Dialogue between teacher and Administrator leaves new teachers powerless when the stakes are higher than a testing schedule mistake or some other school operation mishap. When Tiffany became witness to what she and I perceived to be unethical behavior by the Administration toward kids and families, the lack of any Critical Dialogue foundation left her feeling trapped and helpless.

Tiffany: I then went to a couple of IEP meetings. A lot of the times, looking over some of the services that the students should need. They (the Administration) were like, "Well I feel like this student needs co-teach minutes.".... I started hearing these weird conversations that are like, "Well maybe all they need are consultation minutes." It starts getting into this weird thing where they're like-

Bill: They're fudging the IEP to match the staffing that they have, rather than advocating for new staffing .. Silly move. Immoral too.

Tiffany: Yeah. Elena and I have talked about it. It's interesting. In one case they'll say "their NWEA scores are really low. This must be a fluke." Other ones, they will say "their NWEA scores are really high. This must be a fluke." I've heard it both ways in IEP meetings. Sometimes you just have a fluke here, but you can't decide willy nilly, that yes these results matter, or no they don't, based on what your aid is. It seems like that's what they do a lot of the times, and it is based on staff. I was so mad.

I've been trying to get a student of mine, Danny, services, because he's (a 6th grader) doing math at a 1st grade level. I went in ... to the school psychologist... with all my data to just be like, "Look, this is why Danny needs services. She's like, "Oh no. Well, anyway he failed both of his vision tests, both of his hearing tests. I was like, "That explains something." She was like, "And they're (the Administration) trying to get him transferred out because they don't live in the area." Then when I had my post observation I brought up Danny again. I was like, "I really want to stress that I feel like Danny needs additional support because he's just floating through this year."

She (the Principal) was like, "Well, we might not be able to get him out because the mom is trying to say they're homeless."

Without knowing the details of these situations, I don't want to jump to any causal conclusions, but I think Tiffany's experience shows us the ways that hierarchical structures in schools can possibly be silencing toward and arguably harmful for both teachers and kids. If we consider Danny or the unnamed students with IEPs, we can see the ways that poor kids of color are marginalized, their education being discriminately determined by administrators in an office. Instead of listening to and collaborating with well-intentioned, hard-working teachers who are advocates for, and wish to be in, solidarity with those low-income kids and families of color in urban schools, this is one example of how a hierarchical structure silences those teachers. Tiffany's Principal transmitted hegemonic socializing messages by encouraging compliance and conformity with these harmful, oppressive practices - altering IAPs or denying services to kids who otherwise have no recourse.

Being subject to this kind of socialization when you are morally and politically in opposition to it can have a disorienting, destabilizing impact, making you question your own beliefs and making decisions out of self-preservation, as we've seen earlier with Philip and Olivia. The same was true, in this case, with Tiffany and her Administration:

I was taking it really personally when I was getting flack for not being able to meet the expectations of the Administration. You don't give me the tools to be able to do this efficiently, oh, I'm a failure. You know what I mean? It makes me feel like they don't think I'm relevant to the conversation.

In our Critical Dialogic Partnership, Tiffany tries to reconcile this cognitive dissonance between her own critical care beliefs about professional relationships and her perceptions of the Principal's belief about care:

She (the Principal) can't even treat her own staff empathetically. In some ways, we are her students, right? We are her charge in some ways. I've seen other principals, at both Brown and Correa (CPS schools), very involved. Very, "How are you?" Exuding this idea of care, this feeling of care and involvement. Never really felt that from Thatcher. You know what I mean? I think the weirdest part is just this very acute lack of humanity.

To me, so much of being a successful human being is being able to connect with others, right? Being able to network and being able to understand and empathize. How the fuck do you get to your position of power and not be able to empathize?

As this socializing process continued throughout the year, the cognitive dissonance and other aspects of being a first year teacher - took a heavy toll, emotionally. Ultimately, Tiffany sought professional help in order to help her manage the feelings she was having.

Honestly, it came down to this idea of self preservation. That sounds really dramatic, but at a certain point, I was like, every ... We talked about that feeling of dread, right? The dread soon turned to panic everyday. It just felt like things were falling apart and I didn't know how to put it all back together, basically.

It's just a lot. It felt like no matter what I tried to do differently, no change would happen. I felt like I was just running against a wall. I think for me, I talked to you about this before, this is what I've chosen to do and has been for over a decade, what I want to do and who I want to be. I was finding myself not able to do what I wanted to do and not being the person that I wanted to be. In order to sort of salvage that sense of purpose and that sense of love for teaching, I need to step back, otherwise, I'm going to say, "Fuck it," and completely go away. I didn't really want to do that, you know?

Hegemonic Socialization by Colleagues and Administrators

In the previous spotlighted examples of teacher participants engaged in some sort of dialogue with a colleague or an administrator, the exchanges were between two individuals. In this final example of the chapter, Philip described an experience that involved both an experienced colleague and an administrator around the same incident. In the February Dialogue, Philip recounted a particularly outrageous example that happened to his student Paul, a Black boy, during gym class with a White male veteran teacher:

Yeah, this was during gym class. He's (the gym teacher) like, "Yo, scoot over." (And Paul responded) like "Is this far enough, is this good?" Then he (the Gym Teacher) came over to him (Paul), says "You know, we've got fuckin kids getting shot on the South side of the city for saying stuff like that to cops." Something along those lines. That was the Mom's perspective. Then it was verified by the other gym teacher.

When Paul and Paul's mom seek justice after this incident, they enlist Philip's help. But when Philip advocates for Paul with the Principal, he is told to look the other way:

Yeah, and I talked to the Principal [name redacted]. I was like, “Hey, I just want to make sure that Paul was taken care of and that he feels safe and whatnot. What can I do, what should I do?”

He says “just stay out of it.”

(I respond) “All right. (and if) This happens again, and he comes to me?”

“Stay out of it,” he said.

“Okay, you got it captain.

This final example I think gives us a window into the way that the hegemonic socialization of teachers can sometimes be a collaboration of silencing between two powerful groups. In the example earlier in the chapter, Claire was able to use Critical Dialogue to begin a process of building solidarity between experienced colleagues and administrators (and eventually students) that ultimately supported the learning of kids, the labor of teachers, and the function of the school. In this example, Philip’s attempt to engage his colleague and administrator in critical dialogue is instead met with silencing that ultimately harms at least one student (arguably others, as well), marginalizes parents and families, and arguably contributes to a culture of fear in the school community. Certainly any school that covers up this kind of racist harassment by white teachers of kids of color is incubating oppression.

Hierarchies do not tend to invite disagreement; they survive by silencing dissent, and schools are no exception. Philip experienced that explicitly in this interchange with an administrator, but all four teacher participants bumped up against discouragement and silencing when they felt compelled to speak out about something oppressive or harmful. New teachers need to know that they will encounter such acts, and have political clarity about how they can respond to the aggressor and also demonstrate Critical Care toward the victim. They also need to recognize that challenging these kinds of outrageous acts will not necessarily be welcomed by other stakeholders inside the schoolhouse.

Conclusion

The role of Critical Dialogue - with like-minded colleagues and administrators and with their partnership with me - helped the teacher participants ground themselves in their critical beliefs and even created opportunities where they were able to contribute to positive changes. But in many cases, the influence that experienced teachers and administrators had on the teacher participants could be

categorized as examples of hegemonic socialization, particularly in terms of normalizing the status quo approaches to curriculum and instruction, management of student behavior, and other aspects of how to go about being a professional teacher in an urban school. The teacher participants, who came in with a critical perspective on these aspects of teaching, hoped to build a curriculum that centered the funds of knowledge and build from the social locations of the kids of color and their families, and in a number of cases, were met with resistance and discouragement, pushed to conform to the normalized, common sense ways of being in schools.

Critical Dialogue does not require power or philosophical alignment; rather, Critical Dialogue is a process that can create mutual understanding, new learning and deepened respect across differences of status or belief. But the impediments to the ideal conditions can be tiring and frustrating, particularly when one feels powerless to remove or avoid them. The teacher participants' Critical Dialogic Partnership with me was one way that they were able to reflect and stay rooted in their beliefs as they tried to initiate and nurture their new partnerships with colleagues and administrators.

As we've seen, this conflict between critical teachers and hegemonic socialization can have disorienting effects, causing critical teachers to doubt their abilities, lean toward changing their practices to fit in, or push teachers to leave or be pushed out. The opposite is true, as well; when critical teachers and administrators collaborate to solve problems and improve the lives of the school community, these moments of collaboration can have a generative effect in positive directions, leading new teachers to feel more confident and more empowered.

CHAPTER 6: CRITICAL DIALOGUE WITH/IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

Introduction

Critical Dialogue “with” and “in” the urban community that surrounded their schools meant that the teacher participants engaged with a new set of adults whose connection to the school was primarily relational and familial, not occupational. Once again the teacher participants drew on some core Critical Dialogue practices in these new contexts and relationships - positioning themselves as learners, listening deeply, looking at root causes, and working together to solve issues in ways that meet both peoples needs.

Yet once again, specific additional approaches to Critical Dialogue were needed in order to work in solidarity with/in communities. The teacher candidates and I drew on our shared understanding of the critical scholarship that situated their urban school community in a larger system of inequitable schooling in America, which has traditionally done little to create the conditions for successful dialogue between teachers and urban communities of color. The teacher participants took advantage of the few established structures where teachers and parents formally came together. Positioned in their Critical Dialogic Stance, they tried to be ready, in alternative contexts and circumstances, to initiate dialogue when it may not have been expected. The teacher participants also stayed open to help from more experienced stakeholders, who modeled and supported new ways to engage in Critical Dialogue with/ in the community.

The teacher participants had mixed success applying these experiences from preservice to their first year of teaching. All four found it easier to initiate and maintain Critical Dialogue with parents of their students, especially when that work was facilitated or supported by colleagues and/or administrators. Critical Dialogue with other Community Members outside of the parents and family members of their students proved to be more difficult for the participants, with them reporting very few successful examples. One challenge that the participants listed was lack of contact - a combination of the absence of institutionally-facilitated opportunities and their own inability to make the time; another challenge they reported was competition with the other demands of being a first year teacher.

Critical Dialogue with Parents and Families

The teacher participants Critical Dialogic Stance toward parents and families at their new school was informed, in part, by their experience at UTEP understanding the critical literature about the ways that families and communities of color have been marginalized in the history of US schooling. The stance positioned the participants to question and challenge deficit views that propagate the myth that “students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child’s education” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75).

An additional, and perhaps significant aspect of the teacher participants’ experience attempting to engage parents in Critical Dialogue is that none of the teacher participants are parents, themselves. In the previous chapter, the teacher participants sought Critical Dialogue relationships with students and the professional adults of their school, two groups with whom they shared some sort of experiential overlap. For example, as former middle school students, the participants had some connection and lived experience that they could draw from as teachers of kids; similarly, as teacher candidates working in schools over the two previous years, they had some experiential knowledge of what it was like to be a professional teacher in a school, an experience that helped them empathize with their more experienced colleagues. But none of the participants could draw on the experience of being a parent to help them consider alternative ways of understanding how to engage in Critical Dialogue with parents.

Intentional partnering with parents and families

Without experiential knowledge of what it was like to be a parent, and with limited preservice experience working with parents in schools, the teacher participants knew that they needed to be very intentional about partnering with parents and families from the beginning. This meant looking to colleagues for help and ideas, communicating with parents and families in a language they could understand, and using the structures that were already set up for parent engagement, including report card pickup days.

In a few cases, the teacher participants were given unsolicited help and support from knowledgeable insiders toward building productive relationships with parents. Claire received some coaching from her Principal, Dr. Stevens, who she claimed knew “everybody in the neighborhood” and a Parent Coordinator/Advocate, Ms. Hanson, who had deep relationships with families and community members from growing up in the neighborhood and attending Jones.

Claire: I got some coaching on how to talk to parents at the beginning of the year with Jones. Dr. Stevens pulled me into a conversation with him and the Parent Advocate and we talked through how to talk to parents and then we did it with a parent that I needed to have a conversation with and he gave me some feedback. I think that's been helpful.

Bill: It's very helpful. Do you remember anything concrete that was told to you?

Claire: Yeah. He's like, "It's so disarming when you say, 'I need your help.' Because then what are they going to say? No?"

This kind of targeted support for Claire - critical, dialogic, and centering the needs of kids and families while still empowering the new teacher – is a strong example of the kind of insider help new teachers need and want. Preservice teacher education can provide a base of theoretical knowledge and some limited clinical practice for elements of teaching like working with parents. But ongoing teacher education set in the actual context of the work is needed. This example of scaffolded, on-the-job support from more experienced colleagues who have local, experiential knowledge is an excellent model.

Another example of this kind of on-the-job support for the teacher participants came from colleagues who spoke the home language of the parents and families they were working with. Tiffany did not feel her fluency in Spanish was strong enough to have productive conversations with parents, so she sought assistance from her colleague and close friend, Elena.

Tiffany: Yeah. And I think... a big barrier, and something I thought about a lot... (some of) the parents speak only Spanish. I think that's a really big one. So I've enlisted Elena's help in calling. But I definitely find that it's harder for me to call parents, especially if I don't have anyone there to translate for me. Cause then I feel like, I know enough to be able to say what happened, but not necessarily enough to enter into that dialogue, not fluently. So, yeah. So that's been something.

Bill: It's a challenge. Yeah. Have you found yourself in conversations where you can't understand and tried to...

Tiffany: No, I haven't. I mean, I can understand enough and then I'll kind of fumble my way through it. It's a lot easier in person. Over the phone I think it's a lot more difficult, which is why calling is a lot harder.

The inability of monolingual teachers – or in Tiffany's case, *somewhat* bilingual teachers - to communicate effectively with parents and families in their native language likely reinforces the marginalization that immigrant families already experience when trying to access US Schools; this marginalization diminishes the likelihood of robust critical dialogue. US schools – even ones like Tiffany's, in a predominantly Latinx community, staffed by many bilingual and bicultural teachers - still function primarily in English. This is a passive example of the hegemonic socialization that saturated the experience of the teacher participants, their students, and the parents and families of their students. Critical teachers must recognize these limits, and work against them to provide greater access and clarity.

The structures of US schooling do not need have to be accepted as forms of passive hegemonic reproduction, but can be viewed as sites of resistance, as well. The teacher participants tried to take advantage of the few formal structures where parents and families are compelled to come to the school²⁴, and use them as opportunities for critical dialogue. Report card pickup days, for example, were a chance to meet some parents, even if the traditional structure limited interactions to brief unidirectional conversation. Still, the participants - in a Critical Dialogic Stance toward parents - took steps to engage those parents in attendance on those report card pickup days.

Tiffany: I've been in dialogue with some of the parents. Some parents came in (to report card pickup) to ask how their kids are doing, you know. Like the student that I had, ____, he got a C and his mom's like, he's usually an A, B student, what's going on? So I let her know what I was seeing. "He is bright, but he's not finishing his work. Is this something that you've noticed before?"
I took kind of a plate from Diaz's book, like when I heard her talking to a parent, she was like, is there something we can come up with together to make this better?

Bill: That feels very dialogical.

²⁴ Chicago Public Schools mandates only two non-attendance days for students in the school year (one in Fall and one in the Spring) when parents can come and "pick-up" their child's report card. Schools may choose to add one or two evening curricular events in the Fall (e.g. a "back-to-school" or "Literacy night"), but these events are not required by the system.

Tiffany: Yeah. And she was like, “Well, yeah. I’ll talk to him later on, and I’ll let you know. So call me if anything happens.”

In the *In the Schoolhouse* Chapter, we learned that Tiffany saw Ms. Diaz as an important dialogue partner, and this was an example of how one Critical Dialogue partnership - new teacher and experienced colleague - helped influence another Critical Dialogic partnership – new teacher and parent. Tiffany observed and then copied a specific practice from Ms. Diaz, and then was able to begin a dialogue with that parent, who promised, herself, to return to the dialogue (“*and I’ll let you know*”). The parent even invited Tiffany to continue the dialogue (*So call me if anything happens*).

Grades are another structure of school that can be used to sort students in problematic ways, but were viewed by the teacher participants as an opportunity to open up critical dialogue with parents.

Tiffany: I had a lot of the parents asking why they had certain grades. .

Bill: Did you feel like you had good information for why?

Tiffany: I had the gradebook, so it’s like I can show you exactly where the points are coming from, so that was good. Actually a lot of the parents got on their kids and they turned in work that they hadn’t turned in.

The technical language of school – tests, standards, and ranking/sorting of students – can obfuscate more important information about a child’s development, and can leave parents feeling confused and disoriented and without access to the language or code that is needed to advocate for their child. Rooting conversation about a child’s work in accessible, easy to understand evidence - even something as simple as a gradebook, like in this example from Tiffany –has the potential to invite a dialogic partnership with parents.

A critical care approach to “grades” - which may have been at play here with Tiffany’s approach - means recognizing that grades are a tool in the systemic cycle of failing poor kids of color in schooling. Partnering with parents and kids can lead to a collective lifting up of students who might otherwise be unnecessarily penalized for a lack of clarity about grades. Sometimes parents recognized that the teacher

participant was working on the side of their child and felt compelled to speak out about it, as was the case with one of Philip's families:

- Philip: Mark Greenberg, the head of the LSC is totally against testing. He wrote a (letter to the editor) in the (Sun Times) about PARCC. He's the father of one of my students, (Emily) – who is in 302 .
(Principal) Bowman was like 'Yo, we had this guy Mark Greenberg who's really against test scores. He made it clear in the LSC meeting that we are not just about test scores, that it's not just a number.', that kind of thing.
So then this guy comes to parent-teacher conferences and I didn't know it was him, until we started talking, and we're talking and I'm like, 'All right, Emily, I really appreciate what she's been doing this year so far. She's stepped up her game a little bit. She's participating a little more, blah-blah-blah-blah.'
And he's like, 'You know, I just want to thank you. I want to thank you for teaching the whole child.'
And I was like, 'Thanks man. Thanks for noticing. Appreciate that, thank you.'
Head of the LSC, noticing Mr. Dennis. That was cool.
- Bill: Also, not just noticing you for being like, I don't know, many of the other great qualities that you have, but for a particular approach to education that you believe in. That UTEP believes in. That's counter to the narrative out there.
- Philip: Yeah, clearly he's paid attention - the head of LSC, he's paying attention to something. I would think that it has to do with a number of things, like you never do an hour of homework each night. I think those kinds of things are what he's looking for.

The teacher participants all operated from a place of intentionality when partnering with parents and families, but as each of these examples shows, that intentionality was boosted by the support of some other member of the school community – an administrator, a colleague, or the parent themselves. The resourcefulness of the teacher participants in these cases – either being open to or seeking out support, or taking advantage of the structures of schooling as opportunities for critical dialogue – led to helpful, if fairly limited, connection with parents and families. A stronger Critical Dialogue required the teacher participants to go outside of the required responsibilities of a traditional teacher.

Nurturing Critical Dialogue with parents beyond the required responsibilities

In the spaces when the teacher participants did not have the structure of school or the support of other members of their school community, they found that partnering with parents required innovation and curiosity that went beyond what they expected of their roles as teachers. One of the challenges of

working with middle school-age students was that adolescence tends to be marked by a shift in self-perception and independence, leading to a reduction in dialogue between parents and kids in favor of an increase in peer relationships (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006; Feigenberg, et al,2008). The teacher participants found that this reduction in communication between the kids and parents can contribute to a reduction in communication between parents and teachers, as well.

As the child moves from primary education into middle school, there are fewer casual opportunities for interaction with teachers. Additionally, a shift from one teacher in the primary years to a team of departmentalized teachers can leave parents confused about who to engage with; similarly departmentalized teachers with over 100 students a day, may feel less compelled to reach out to parents of kids they don't know on a deep level.

With these structural realities under consideration, the teacher participants pushed themselves to reach out and get to know parents and families outside of their classroom, going beyond the perception that being a teacher is only "In the Classroom" or "In the Schoolhouse." Olivia, in our February Critical Dialogue, reflected on how interacting with parents at events that they choose to come to deepened her previously limited relationships.

Olivia: There's definitely been more contact with parents. Not really as much as I would like, but I have been in touch with them more. It's really just from going to the kids' events like their basketball games and their volleyball games and stuff like that. I still haven't had a lot of time to make a bunch of phone calls, but I'm texting them more, the parents, and seeing them more at events. Not really in the sense that I was thinking, but I'm in contact with more, just not over the phone. More like face to face.

Bill: I'm very curious about the contact you're having with them at games.. What's that like?

Olivia: It's crazy because parents come out for report card pick ups and progress reports and stuff like that, but you'd be surprised by how we've had report card pick up planned for a couple weeks or whatever and we'll have an okay turnout, but there'll be a boy's basketball game that we're going to forfeit, but didn't end up forfeiting it, and it was packed.

Bill: Yeah. What does that say? What does that tell you?

Olivia: Sports is a big deal. Parents who don't really see their kids performing well academically really live to see them physically perform well.

Bill: Do you use those opportunities to get to know them or is it just kind of like...

Olivia: Not really get to know them. Just meet them really and get talk to them. I thought I would know more parents by now, but there are very few parents that I would know by face, know who they are.

Olivia came to a similar realization about the potential to expand her Critical Care toward her students by attending these same basketball games. Here she has seen that the same approach also improved her relationships with parents, and presented new avenues for building dialogic partnerships. Reflecting on this experience, Olivia reaffirmed her own critical analysis of school-sponsored events. (*"Parents who don't really see their kids performing well academically really live to see them physically perform well."*)

This was a lesson I learned as a girls and boys basketball coach during my time as a middle school classroom teacher. Almost immediately, I was struck by the ways that I was able to build relationships with parents at basketball games or after practice, and then built on those partnerships to help re-engage their children in academic success. In a few cases, these were partnerships with parents that had been difficult to track down; after bonding over their child's success outside of school, these parents felt they could trust me when I switched to talking about academic success.

These relationships with parents born over basketball games showed me that parents of adolescents are often looking for other adults to help them make sense of their own child. This was counter-intuitive for me, as a non-parent; I always assumed that the parent felt an expertise about their own child. But as a middle school teacher, I found myself in unexpected collaboration with parents sometimes, simply trying to help each other figure out their constantly changing adolescent. I see this partnering with parents as part of the dialogic Critical Care approach of 'othermothering.' Claire experienced this a number of times in her first year.

Claire: I think sometimes the parents need somebody to vent to their kid about, too. They

need another adult

Bill: Who knows their kid.

Claire: If they're the parent in the household and they don't have that second parent, they need somebody to just say, "My kid's driving me crazy." That happened to me twice recently. This mom was texting me on picture day. She was like, "I don't know what to do. I tried to take Anthony to get his hair cut five times. He is refusing to get his hair cut. He's refusing to dress differently for the picture. He's refusing to wash himself. I don't know what to do. I just really hope that he doesn't make a big scene or something. I'm really sorry.

One of the most common utterances I heard from parents of middle schoolers I worked with was "I don't even recognize my own child anymore." The teacher participants heard this, as well, and in a few cases, like the one below described by Claire, used it as an opportunity to be a Critical Dialogue partner with a parent.

Claire: Then this week, I was texting (another) mom about her kid, and I was like, "Has Ronald shown you anything about the Constitution?" She's like, "No...What did he get on (the Constitution) test?" It was a 40 or 50 percent or lower. She was like, "You know what? He can't even bring home the form? I'm over it. If he doesn't want to graduate, he doesn't want to graduate."
Then she tells me that on report card pickup day when he was home alone, he invited a bunch of friends over, trashed the house, ran away, and then raised his hand to hit her. She was like, "I don't even know what's going on with my child. This is not my child."
I was like, "I've known Ronald for a little bit over a year now, because I knew him in the Spring of last year."-" I was like, "This isn't the Ronald I know, either. I'm going to say Ms. Fowler and I have had conversations. We don't really know what's going on with him."
I said to her, "You're a great mom. When you came to report card pickup, you held him accountable. You continued to reach out to me and Ms. Fowler to make sure that you're continuing to hold them accountable. You're doing a good job. I don't know what's going on, but you're not ..."

Bill: It's not because of something you're doing.

Claire: Right. She's like, "Well, maybe I'll take him to a counselor."
She went from "I'm just going to let him sit in juvie for 3 days" to "I'm going to make him an appointment at a counselor."
Part of it was she just probably cooled down and was like, "Wait, this is my kid."

Bill: Parenting, like you're saying, especially when you're a single parent, is like

teaching. It can be very isolating

Claire: Yeah, absolutely.

Bill: You (said), "Wait, let me reaffirm for you the things that I'm seeing. Let me even say to you, not as a mom, but, "you're doing a good job, Mom," which I think is interesting. You're not speaking from a place of authority as a mom when you validate somebody else's motherhood, but you know enough to be able to say I can see from my standpoint that-

Claire: You're doing all the things I would do for my kid and that's all I can...

Bill: That's all you can do. That validation sounds like it had a transformative effect, maybe temporary, maybe long-term, on her ability to stick with it, to stick to doing what she's doing. Again, with this metaphor of taking a village, it's ... Adolescence is a crazy time.

Claire: Oh, it's so crazy.

Bill: When somebody starts acting out of character, you need other people's eyes to say, "Are you seeing what I'm seeing, too? Help me make an informed social decision here." I don't want to be the only one that's making this decision. I think that's what teaching is, too.

An idiom that describes what Claire is doing here with various parents is "staying on the same page" which can be an expression that can describe what it means to "maintain Critical Dialogue." She and the parent are using Critical Dialogue to generate new knowledge about the child they both know and see daily; this process confirms, and then possibly normalizes for each other, the changes that are happening with a child they both see daily. We see it below with Philip as well:

Yeah, and I understand where he (Timmy, a child in Philip's class) is coming from. His mom does, too. Me and his mom got along. I called her the one time, it's like, "This is what I'm working on with Timmy." That's literally what she said probably a month and a half later in the parent teacher conference that we set up. She said the exact same thing we talked about on the phone. "We're working on his reactions and how he gets self-righteous, and gets angry, and that distracts from the actual problem." That's what the kid's working on.

I think this example from Philip points out the way that an initial Critical Dialogue with a parent (the phone call) can lead to continued, sustained Critical Dialogue across the year, in this case the maintained focus between teacher, parent, and child a month and a half later. I suspect that the payoff of initiating Critical Dialogue didn't always yield tangible results for the teacher participants; the frustration

from that lack of results may lead to some drop off on that intentionality. But initial steps toward Critical Dialogue with parents and families can lead to improved opportunities later in the year, when the need for a Critical Dialogic partnership may actually be greater.

Maintaining dialogue, once it's started, is another aspect of the work of Critical Dialogue that takes time and support. One helpful 'maintenance' step was for the teacher participants was to enlist the help of other staff and colleagues. Claire did this in collaboration with her grade level colleague, Fowler.

Claire: Fowler and I do that a lot. We were sitting there during breaks together and we're talking about one of my students and we could pinpoint the week she stopped doing her work between our two grade books.

Bill: Wow, that's powerful.

Claire: Then when I called the mom, because she's in my homeroom, and then one of the (staff members, Ms. Diamond) came and expressed something to me and was just like, "Do you have Rita's mom's number? Because I keep leaving and I keep seeing her standing on the corner with her boyfriend. I know she doesn't live around here. They're all hugged up, standing on the corner."
(Then) She called the mom and the mom was like, "Oh, yes. Rita's been telling me she's been getting out of after school late....."
"Nope. She gets out at the same time everyday."

Bill: Wow.

Claire: Ms. Diamond, myself, Ms. Fowler, Rita, and her mother all sat down and had this conversation. What we basically said (was), "This is not the child we know. We know you and we love you, Rita. We're not trying to be mean to you. We're not trying to pick on you. We're calling out these behaviors because we know that you're not living up to your potential. The fact that Ms. Fowler and I can each pull up our multiple grade books and say this is the week that Rita stopped doing work. Something's going on. Do you need to share with us anything or are you just going to get it together? What's going to happen? Because we don't want to see this child going forward."

Bill: What did she say? What was her response?

Claire: She came in a new different child the next day.

I see this story as an extension and application of dialogic critical care; a mother and three 'othermothers' helping to raise up this child, talking honestly with her about what they see in her, and demanding that she rise to those collective expectations. The intersection of critical care with a child,

critical dialogue with colleagues, and critical dialogue with parents led to – in this example – a collective critical care that likely was more powerful than the care of a single teacher - not just for the student receiving the care, but for the collective of adults, as well.

Critical Dialogue With/In the Community

Preparing for Working With/In the Community

The teacher participants' Critical Dialogic Stance toward working in solidarity with communities was informed by the participants' theoretical and clinical work during their time at UTEP, a multi-step process of, first unlearning and critically examining the deficit orientation and savior complex found in teaching in urban communities, and then a re-learning of liberatory, transformative education that is with and in solidarity with low-income urban communities of color. Across two years, they completed ethnographies of the communities that surrounded one of their residency placement schools, made asset maps that helped them conceptualize opportunities for engaging the funds of knowledge of communities, and had multiple opportunities to engage Chicago communities and community members in critical dialogue.

Through such work, they learned to develop Critical Dialogue practices that recognized and challenged colonial, sociological 'research' on communities of color, instead encouraging dialogic learning. They read about community-centered curriculum development, drawn from examples like the one instituted by Paulo Freire as superintendent of Sao Paulo schools, where teachers worked with community stakeholders to identify local issues and developed inquiry units based on generative themes (O'Cadiz, et al, 1988). They created hypothetical units based on these models that drew on themes they learned about through dialogue with Chicago kids and community members.

But as we have seen with the teacher participants Critical Dialogue work with other members of the school community, their Critical Dialogic Stance was just a starting position or posture. The actual work of initiating Critical Dialogue with community members – other than the parents of their students - proved to be very challenging for the teacher participants, more so than with any other stakeholder. The four participants all explained their struggles around distinct but related reasons; Tiffany reported

struggling to find the time to get out in the community, noting “but I don’t leave the building... I just never go anywhere.” Similarly, Philip stated, “I really haven’t engaged the community as much as I want, in terms of my own research and in terms of my own outreach, literally. The reason for that is that I’m trying to get my bearings straight, where I’m at, and I will gradually work my way out.”

Claire and Olivia reported similar desires to get out into the community and engage with community members, but struggled to make it happen. Claire told me:

Claire: Um, I thought this was an interesting reflection. I think that one of the things that it reveals is that I’m not doing a lot of work with the community.

Bill: Do you want to talk about why not the community?

Claire: Yeah. Um, I think, why not the community? It’s just because the other things are easier, and there’s a lot of other stuff on my plate as a first year teacher. So I feel like every week there’s like one more thing that I can handle adding to my plate. Like at first it was just like “gotta have plans for tomorrow, gotta have the work graded, gotta show up. Get my stuff up on the board.” And now I feel like I’m doing a better job at like managing, talking to parents, and making sure that they’re feeling like their voice is heard, and doing more long term planning on problem solving. So it’s like I’m moving there, but there’s only so much you can do and only so much time and... I feel like community members is the one with the least ease of access.

Similarly, Olivia and I talked about:

Olivia: I know about Auburn Clifton as a community, but ... I don’t know what positive notes there are. My parents (and the) teachers have told me ... that it’s dangerous and like, leave school before it gets dark. Winter’s coming, it’s getting darker sooner. Don’t stay, so... I’d like to get more in touch with the community members just so I can see what the neighborhood’s all about..

Bill: Yeah. But thinking about engaging the community in any sort of way, your only real impression that you have is these sort of negative perceptions. So, trying to find out the positives, the assets of the community would be something that you could consider trying to do. To look into the positives of that neighborhood and try to find out what they are?

Olivia: I would absolutely want to do that

Despite their experience and knowledge that the surrounding area of their school was an asset-rich community with individuals and funds of knowledge, they struggled in their first year of teaching to make their way outside of the school, itself. I would argue that once again we see the ways that the

hegemonic socialization of teachers is present in the experience of the four participants. For one, the structure of schooling - the professional requirements for successfully completing their job - did not require any formal engagement with the community. The requirements for being an effective teacher, in the systems' eye, all exist within the schoolhouse. In addition, those requirements took up enough time that the teacher participants did not feel that they had enough time to act on their desire to engage with the community.

I can also see how some members of the school community - in Olivia's case, parents and other teachers - socialized the teacher participants to see the urban community outside of the school as a place to fear. Theoretical analysis and critical consciousness raising may have helped the teacher participants to unlearn those socializing perceptions of low-income neighborhoods as spaces to fear; certainly Olivia, who grew up in a neighborhood just west of Clifton, brought her own lived experience about what is safe and unsafe near her school.

But when the hegemonic viewpoint was reinforced by experienced insiders, the teacher participants may have felt influenced in the same ways that we've seen those socializing forces push on their Critical Dialogic Stance toward other aspects of the work.

Tapping into the Funds of Knowledge in the Community.

Not all insider perceptions reinforced the hegemonic viewpoint, and when the teacher participants sought out local experts that had positive views of the community, and saw themselves as members, it helped the teacher participants get to know more about the assets and funds of knowledge within the communities around their schools.

Bill: Who do you think might help you with that? Is there anyone from the neighborhood that works in the school?

Olivia: There are crossing guards that come in very early in the morning, and they have the little room in the old building of the school. So I'm sure they live, they're local. I'm sure they live very close. So maybe them.

Bill: How might you enlist their help?

Olivia: I don't know. I'm just curious...

Similarly, Claire explained:

I think part of that, too, is the way that Jones has positioned itself is that it's very rare for a principal to be at a school for as long as Dr. Stevens has been. He knows everybody in the neighborhood. I think because people know that he supports me, I come in on good terms. Then it's up to me to either make those terms.

The strongest examples of Critical Dialogue with/in the community were when the teacher participants were able to collaborate with others who had spent more time or were members of the community around their new school. This is perfectly logical; the idea that a newcomer into any situation can expect to immediately build trust and absorb all of the local knowledge in a space is unrealistic, and the same generosity should be extended to new (urban) teachers. As described earlier, when the teacher participants had mentorship from others with more knowledge, they were able to more easily engage in critical dialogue with parents. This also was the case when it came to engaging with community members that were not related directly to the work of the teacher participants. Claire's experience helping to squash a potentially volatile situation with some students of her and some other kids in the neighborhood that she didn't know was successful because of the help of other members of her school community

Claire: So I talked to ... Apparently (one of my students, Tyrell) was cursing out the after school teacher and one of the kids from (that) classroom came and knocked on (my) door. This is Solomon, who I have the longest history with because I taught him last year, but also a very combative relationship with. And he was like "You need to go talk to Tyrell." So I popped my head in, I'm like, "Is everything okay?" Nothing seems totally askew. So I say, "Okay, come here Tyrell. Tell me what's going on." So he starts telling me, "Well he said this, that." I was like, "Who's he? What's going on?" Apparently somebody told Tyrell that (my new student) James said something about Tyrell's dead cousin and then things kind of blew up. So it was a lot of people putting themselves in between a conflict, but then I guess someone named JoJo, whose real name I don't know, said that he shot my student from last year who got shot before the beginning of the school year

Bill: All right, yeah.

Claire: People say that he did it even though I guess he didn't. He (JoJo) was standing outside the gate at recess, and so I talked to Miss Fager (the Assistant Principal) and I was like, "Did you see anyone at the gate?" And then I realized that this was a situation that couldn't

really be handled just by me, so I went and got Dr. Stevens (the Principal). So Dr. Stevens knows Tyrell's dad, and also knows the foster parents of James ... He basically was able to shut it down. And he goes, "By the way Miss Hanson, let's get JoJo's grandma on the phone and talk to her."

Bill: Right so (Dr. Stevens also knows) a kid that's not even enrolled in school.

Claire: And apparently it's like Blue Island's here, the school's here, there's some homes here, there's another housing project over here. And James lives here and Tyrell lives here and so they're...

Bill: The beef is ... Right. Where they live. Boundary.

Claire: And someone was like, "Well they said this about your dead cousin." And suddenly we're flying off the handle.

Bill: So that's another good example of you leveraging the relationships that you have. A kid told you, because they trusted you, and said that something was up. Then you went and did something about it. You engaged another kid in a dialogue about what was going on, which then led you to engaging your administration.

Claire: Right. And that's where you think about what closing schools does to communities because ... Or just that high turnover rate, what it does to communities. Well the building's still there, but all those relationships are gone. I don't know anything about this person being from over here or this person being from over here, and I don't know who JoJo's grandma is and suddenly like ... I mean, you don't know what could've happened. And so having that longevity and those relationships and saying "I know your father and your father knows me. And he came to me and told me to make sure I educate you, and so I'm going to do that for whatever it takes. And you may be new to this school, but you know who I am because you've lived in this community a long time."

Bill: Right. "And I know a lot of people that you know."

Claire: And your sister's gone to this school and ...

Bill: So *you* know, in a way. Even though you're an outsider, you're also included in that knowing

Claire: Right. And then the next day, Tyrell came up to me and he's like, "Miss Hurley, I just want you to know, all that stuff is done. I'm not doing it anymore. If I have any other problems I'm gonna come see you." He was like, "I just love you, Miss Hurley." And I'm like, "I love you, too, Tyrell."

It would be unfounded to claim that Critical Dialogue, when it's working amongst all school stakeholders, can literally save lives. But with all of the ways that school silences dialogue, this story shows a number of noteworthy ways that Claire, her students, fellow teachers, administrators, parents, and community members came together to restore a conflict and possibly prevent further violence. It also points to the way that Critical Dialogue can begin with new teachers, but often must engage other stakeholders in order to have broad impact like in this case. It seems to have been significant that Claire recognized that this was a situation beyond the scope of her ability/responsibility as a new teacher without longstanding ties to the community, and with families she didn't already have relationships with.

Silencing Dialogue between the Community and the School

Not every group of school stakeholders engaged in this kind of integrated Critical Dialogue. Even Jones, itself, had plenty of moments when communication and problem solving broke down. But Claire's analysis resonates when she points to the ability of a neighborhood school like Jones managing to avoid high teacher turnover, serving as an anchor for families, and remaining a place where people are known and seen. The schools of the other teacher participants could not boast the same claim, and the clearest counter example was Olivia's school, Clifton.

Clifton was one of many schools AUSL has "turned around;" essentially this has meant, among other moves, firing the entire staff and requiring teachers and others reapply for their jobs. It's significant that AUSL has carried out this process almost exclusively on the South and West sides in Black neighborhoods in Chicago. This intentional process of uprooting the connection to community in effect eliminates the chance of any kind of integrated critical dialogue that made the previous story of Claire and her colleagues at Jones possible.

Olivia witnessed first hand the way that those left over in the turnaround process -. She also received socializing messages about how she should viewed those students in the school. The young kids – those who maybe weren't old enough to understand the uprooting that had taken place, were "New Clifton." Olivia's students - the 7th and 8th graders who watched as all of their teachers from grades K- 6

were fired and replaced by AUSL-trained teachers – were considered Old Clifton, and were to be treated as hostile and resistant.

Bill: Old Clifton.

Olivia: Old Clifton, and they're not changed yet, and the eighth graders aren't going to. Everyone said, "We're just trying to get them out. We just have to push them out. We just have to move them out," and then seventh grade, "We just have to move them out." Everyone else is reformable, maybe, but seventh and eighth grade ...

Bill: Just not bought-in.

Olivia: And they're not going to, because there's not enough time. They (AUSL) say it takes five years to turn around a school, and they (the 7th and 8th graders) are leaving, so they're not going to be a part of the solution. End of story. When we have the walk-throughs, they (AUSL leadership) steer them away from middle school, so I haven't had a lot of people in my room at all, and when I did, it was at the beginning of the year when students were more manageable, anyway.

So Olivia learned when she arrived that Clifton was already destabilized and divided when she arrived at the start of Year 2 of the AUSL turnaround. But the problem got worse across during Olivia's first year there, and she watched many teachers leave - teachers that were new to begin with, and part of this turnaround process, not lasting beyond a year in the process.

Olivia: I don't know. We had a music teacher, but then he quit.

Bill: So you've had a couple quit?

Olivia: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Now for music it, they're just in the computer lab.

Olivia: I just don't understand. I just don't get it. And, the dean's been out. He had a mental breakdown, and went out for like a week, and so it's just a free for all. That's almost funny.

Bill: It is almost. It's terrible, you're going down the list, the principal, the dean, the math teacher that's more experienced than you, that's supposed to be looking out for you. There's other teachers that have quit. The music teacher quit, what did you say? The fifth grade teacher quit too.

Olivia: Now the principal has to teach his classes and she's getting irritated. Two of my kids went home before I even saw them this morning, because they got in a fight. There's no clear cut consequences for anything.

Olivia: Oh, yeah. Okay. The assistant principal left, and ...

Bill: Abruptly? Out of nowhere?

Olivia: Yeah, she's gone, and she didn't have a good presence, anyway. I don't think they noticed that she's not there anymore.

Bill: You had a coach from AUSL most of the year.

Olivia: not most. She quit.

Olivia: I think that what contributes to the problem of schools like AUSL is the turnover. Is Teacher turnover. I don't want to be a part of the problem but then again, it's almost like they give me no chance. It's not sustainable. I don't want to be a part of the problem and I don't want to turn to teacher turnover, but you're also part of the problem because you're making it unbearable.

I am arguing in this project that Critical Dialogue not only inquires after root causes, but, through engaging in the creation of new knowledge, lays down new roots and establishes bonds. Teacher and school turnover like this *upends* roots, eliminating opportunities for people to integrate established knowledge with new knowledge that can solve complex problems and organize communities to address their limit situations. Schools like AUSL-run Clifton, whose agenda is not to lay roots and address problems systemically, prioritize saving individual students from neighborhoods, not lifting up the community. This is a colonial process, carried out without consent or dialogue by folks with who have demonstrated their ability to function in a hierarchy, not the harder work of building solidarity.

These two examples from Claire's experience and Olivia's experience point to two ways that groups of stakeholders who are not necessarily required to work together can either come together to solve problems, or choose to walk away and abandon problems. It points to, I think, the precarious context necessary for Critical Dialogue, where so many different factors can complicate and disrupt the process.

Conclusion

The teacher participants came into their first year with the knowledge and experience to build Critical Dialogic relationships and partnerships with/in the communities that surrounded their schools, but

they found a number of roadblocks along the way. Whether it was engaging with parents and families or other members of the community, inquiring into and drawing upon the assets that would enrich their instruction with students, or working in solidarity to address the needs that affected their students, the teacher participants had strong and informed intentions, but few positive, generative results.

The biggest hurdle seemed, therefore, not to be effort or desire, but an incapability to prioritize community and parent engagement over the other competing aspects of being a first year urban teacher. I argue that this is, in part due to the hegemonic socialization of teachers, as not many other members of the school community or structures within the job encouraged or supported the engagement of the community, let alone took a stance toward solidarity with/in the community. Beyond a lack of systemic support, there was sometimes active and passive discouragement that matched a hegemonic perspective that urban school communities have few assets and only deficits that need fixing.

Still, there were a number of hopeful examples of Critical Dialogue that were often the result of collaboration between the teacher participant and some other school stakeholder - a more experienced colleague, an administrator, a parent - whose insider knowledge helped bring the teacher participant into a position where Critical Dialogue could be better supported and nurtured. In other cases, the teacher participant was part of a large group working together. These examples are hopeful counternarratives to the hegemonic narrative that schools and communities do not need one another.

CHAPTER 7: CRITICAL DIALOGUE PARTNERSHIPS WITH A TEACHER EDUCATOR

In Chapter 4, 5 and 6, I focused my analysis on the critical dialogue that the teacher participants engaged in with various members of their school communities in the classroom, in the schoolhouse, and with/in the community, as told to me in our bimonthly dialogues. In this chapter, I focus my analysis on the Critical Dialogue Partnerships, themselves – the process by which the teacher participant and me, the teacher educator and researcher, used dialogue to make critical sense of the participants’ first year as an urban school teacher. The analysis is rooted both in my own thinking and reflection on the process, as well as reflections from the teacher participants, which I present alongside my own thinking.

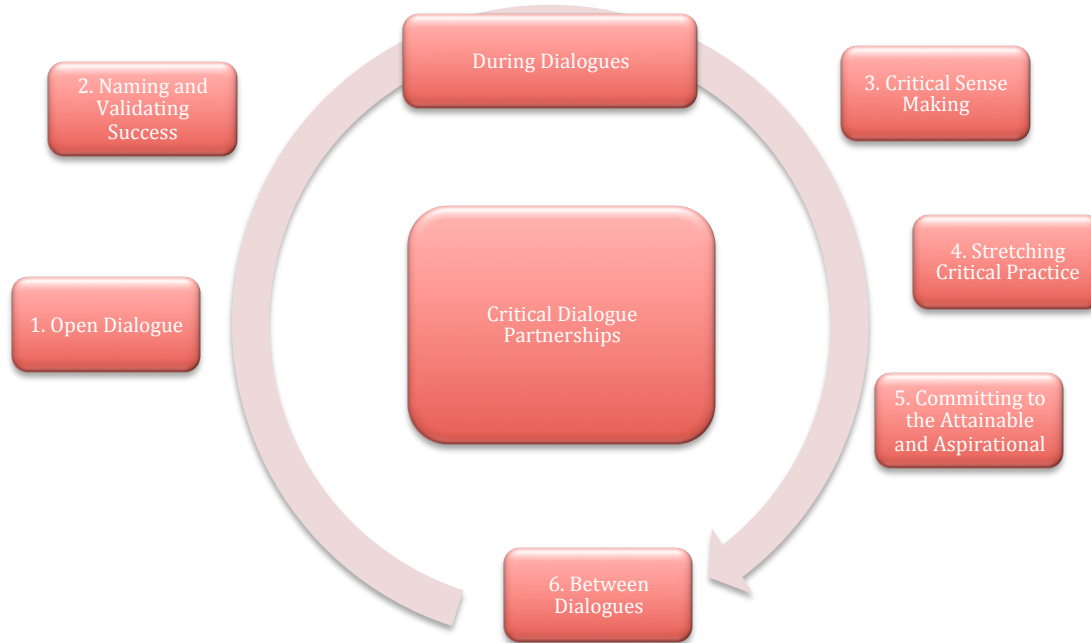
In this chapter, I first describe the Praxis Cycle that we engaged in during the partnerships, using examples of dialogue with the participants that took place during each of the phases to help illustrate the distinct nature of each phase. As described in the Methods chapter, the Praxis Cycle was codified during the analysis phase, and not an articulated process that was implemented at the start of the study. In this way, the Praxis cycle – though heavily influenced by me, as facilitator – has elements of co-construction in partnership with the participants.

I then discuss my analysis of the role of two key design elements – the third space location and the role of the teacher educator as partner. Both elements were part of the original design; my analysis is focused on the perceptions of the participants as well as my own reflections on what these two elements contributed to the process.

The Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships

The Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships can be separated into two parts - “During Critical Dialogues” - the five phases that the teacher participant and I engaged in during the five bi-monthly meetings - and “Between Critical Dialogues” - the sixth and final phase enacted separately and individually by me and the teacher participants in the time between our bimonthly meetings. Given this framing, I argue that the teacher participants and I went through the complete Praxis cycle five times during this project (October, December, February, April, June). The Praxis Cycle is captured in the figure below (Figure 1)

Figure 1: The Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships



My articulation of the phases of the Praxis Cycle came about after analyzing the dialogues that are the data of this project. I did not lead the teacher participants deliberately through the named process below in any sort of formalized framework. Though I had a loose agenda in mind for what I thought Critical Dialogues could and should be, I wanted the process to be emergent and to create space for co-construction with the participants. This positioning is pedagogically consistent with the Freirean conception of dialogue from which this study draws a conceptual framework.

In my framing each element of the Praxis Cycle as a ‘phase,’ I recognize that the cycle was not a linear or methodical step by step process, but more generative and organic in the way that human processes tend to be, overlapping and wrapping in circular directions. I use the term “phase” rather than “step” to attempt to capture this overlapping process. Nonetheless, the articulation of an ordered set of phases helps to capture the ways that we moved through a process that did in fact begin with an Open Dialogue and often ended with Making Commitments.

The first two phases of the praxis - “Open Dialogue” and “Naming and Validating Success” - are reflective of critical care, but directed toward novice urban teachers. Similarly, the third and fourth phases - “Critical Sense-Making” and “Stretching Critical Practice” - reflect an application of curricular

standpoint to the induction and ongoing education of novice urban teachers. The fifth step - “Committing to the Attainable and Aspirational” - keeps the praxis in motion, sending both the teacher and the teacher educator on critical and dialogical paths to be explored in the time between dialogues. A description of each phase follows.

1) Open Dialogue

Generally speaking, each of the twenty critical dialogues began with an ‘open dialogue’ where the teacher participant and I talked for an unbound and undeclared amount of time. However, ‘open’ did not mean discussion of random or far-ranging topics; the teacher participants and I knew that we were here to talk about their teaching practice through a critical and dialogic lens, so the open dialogue time generally remained focused on critical or dialogic aspects of their teaching practice and how that was influenced by their emerging dialogic relationships with the various members of their school community and the current events of the world around us.

As facilitator, I was an active participant, posing questions and sharing stories and anecdotes from my classroom teaching experience that related to the topics raised by the participant. However, I did less talking during the open dialogue time than in other phases of the praxis cycle, preferring to foreground the ideas and experiences of the teacher participant. I sought to make this time an opportunity for the teacher participants to talk about their own work and to feel listened to.

As I described in the Methods chapter, I used a Critical Dialogue “Starter” in October, December and June to push participants to engage in critical analysis of their practice (see Appendix A and B). The rationale for my use of ‘starters’ grew from my experience with dialogic pedagogy as a classroom teacher and teacher educator, hoping to avoid the possibility of not having *something for us to dialogue about*. Additionally, I know that my students and I have been socialized to expect the teacher to set the agenda (the syllabi, the plan for the day), and that it was possible the participants – coming to a meeting that I had set as part of a research study – would expect me to run the meeting. In the end, the prompts served as a helpful initial scaffold for sparking conversation, and soon we were able to construct a dialogue together that wasn’t reliant on a piece of curriculum that I introduced.

The teacher participants specifically named this aspect of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships as a helpful process during their first year of teaching. Tiffany, for example, said, “I think (it was) a really free way to express and to hash things out. I could hear myself talk. (It helps me to consider) “Oh okay that sounds ridiculous” or “that sounds pretty all right.” And Olivia said, “[It’s a place] Where I can really hear ... really talk about ... Really think and talk about what’s going on completely.” These comments point to the idea that the Open Dialogue phase is an example of critical care, centering the importance of storytelling as a form of documenting and demonstrating exhibitions of success and struggle, as Claire described:

It’s nice to sit here and tell those stories, too. Because sometimes the day to day of grading papers and lesson plans and all of these other things is what my attention gets focused on the most, and I forget ... not forget ... But these things just slide under the radar.

More evidence of how the open dialogue phase reflects critical care toward new teachers is how it honors the knowledge and experience of the learner, and centers the issues around the needs of that person, in that moment. This is a process that deepens individual relationships, the centerpiece of critical care. Tiffany reflected:

It sounds funny because it’s so textbook. Honestly, I love the fact that we can just hang out and chat in some real way. (It’s similar to the way that) teachers going and sitting with their kids at lunch or something. You know what I mean? I honestly feel super comfortable sharing not only professional life, but my personal life. Like you were saying, all that stuff goes into it. To have a really meaningful relationship with teachers .

In the open dialogue phase, I was not a passive witness, nor was I dismissive of the issues being raised. Instead, I was an active, sympathetic listener, considering the concerns of the teacher participants against a backdrop of larger systemic injustice, hoping to help them make sense of their challenges and acknowledge their success.

2) Naming and Validating Success

As I listened during the open dialogue, one of the instinctual moves I found myself making was naming and validating the success of the teacher participant back to them as they told their stories. I

believe that, in part, this came as a response to the struggle that I was seeing in the participants recognizing their own success at various points in the year. At several points in the study, each participant experienced drops in their self-efficacy and self-esteem, sometimes brief and sometimes extended.

One of the challenges of a social practice like teaching is that the participants' sense of their own progress can be influenced by and in competition with the perceived success of their colleagues, who tended to be more experienced teachers. In the field of education, there does not appear to be enough of an established culture around supporting the incremental growth of novices, and new teachers sometimes find themselves unrealistically expecting to be great right away. As part of the dialogic critical care, I tried to help them stay grounded in a space of accomplishment that was appropriate for their novice status. Claire reflected:

"I feel like it was helpful to have you say 'But that's what success sometimes looks like for a first-year teacher.' Instead of me, comparing myself to veteran teachers and looking for my success to look like theirs. That was really helpful for me. It gave me confidence to go back and dig in and fix the things that I really did need to continue to work on, and still need to continue to work on."

In other cases, "naming and validating Success" meant helping the teacher participants re-cognize their practice, to look a second time at something they were doing and seeing the ways in which it was actually much more than how they were seeing it in the moment. In some ways, this was an attempt to help them connect the small steps they were taking to the larger pedagogy they had come into their first year with, to help show them that they were likely operating from that position all along. Philip names his appreciation for that aspect of the Partnership in this way :

I like the reflective views because I think of things that I wouldn't normally articulate, or it forces me to articulate ideas and deepen them, even if it's sort of through your wording, you know? A lot of times, I'll say like, "Oh, I'm doing this," and then you bounce back, "Well, this is what I'm hearing. This is what it seems like." That overarching (perspective, saying) "let's articulate what is actually going on here" and then we would go back-and-forth, It's like, "Oh, I'm doing that." "Oh, that's kind of cool."

In my analysis of the Critical Dialogues, I noticed that naming and validating success sometimes helped me directly address what I perceived to be encroaching hegemonic socialization. Olivia reflected

in June about the ways that earlier in the year, my validation of her critical analysis of the oppressive practices of her grade level partner helped her resist the compulsion she felt to mimic and adopt her approach.

Olivia: You also said something... I felt like for a while I was trying to be more like my grade level partner, cause she was getting results as far as management goes. And you were telling me something about my approach and why I shouldn't try to completely revamp it, and that helped a lot, too, cause that was kind of a low point. I was dealing with a lot of behaviors that she wasn't, and I was thinking about what I should do differently.

Bill: I think that's a good example of the socialization thing I'm talking about. You were feeling in this moment like, I have these ideas about what I want to teach, some of them are informed by my experience, some of them by UTEP, but I'm seeing this person who I have to spend everyday with, having success differently then me. Maybe I should change. But then talking to me, you were like, "Wait a minute, I know what I'm talking about."

I see a response like Olivia's as an example of how this phase of the Praxis cycle was helpful for the teacher participants not simply to 'feel better' in the moment, but also to recognize the patterns in their work that were leading toward a more critical and dialogic teaching practice. I wonder if this is something they may have been able to see on their own; these realizations may have contributed to their ability to find additional strength, which I saw as necessary to the next phases of critical sense-making and eventual stretching of their critical practice.

3) Critical Sense-Making

After listening closely to the open dialogue and reaffirming the teacher candidates' success, I noticed that I would often move us into what I am calling the critical sense-making phase of the Praxis cycle, analyzing and dialoguing about the the various phenomena that were the cognizable objects of that meeting. This critical sense-making was truly a collaborative effort, applying what each member of the partnership knew about critical theory and critical teaching to this new phenomenon. In this way, we continuously pushed each other's thinking. However, there were times when this process was more instructive, and I stepped in more directly than usual to name a phenomenon that the teacher participant

was grappling with and framed it from a critical perspective. Often, this meant linking the example back to something we'd read together in class, as exemplified in this conversation with Olivia:

- Olivia: SparkNotes has a division called No Fear Shakespeare and it has the original text on one side and the modern translation on the other side. ..and we go back and forth. Some passages I'll pull out that I think, "This is a passage that I think they can figure out the real Shakespeare version without using No Fear." We'll stop and do that..
- Bill: Do you have a conversation with them about code switching in those moments?
- Olivia: No. I need to though; teach them what that is.
- Bill: Right, because Shakespeare is such a good example of the culture of power like what we talked about with Delpit the idea that for lack of a better term the white world and access to power in college. That's a commodity like Shakespeare is, being able to talk about that. What she's saying is you've got to teach kids not only those things, but also why those things are valuable to learn; not because I told you so, but because they give you access. What you're trying to do with SparkNotes is perhaps to say, "It's a language. Here's a language we understand and then there's a language of Shakespeare and we're trying to break through that in a way that gives us some access to it."
- Olivia: Oh. I need to do something and make them realize why it's important and why they should learn it.

Other times, our critical sense-making came about as part of a Problem-Posing pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992) that encouraged the teacher participant to see the phenomenon in a new way. In general, the teacher participants responded positively to the problem-posing method, as exemplified in this comment from Olivia, "I haven't been asked these questions before ever so it gives me a lot of time and a lot of space to reflect. Really think and talk about what's going on completely," as well as Tiffany,

"It's nice because as much as I get bogged down, I feel like you have this tendency - It's a Bill thing to do - to make things, to ask ... What are the bigger issues at stake? I think that's really good for me to be able to remove myself for a second and be like, okay. What are these things about? To me that's really powerful. I don't feel as isolated."

As the problem posing method became more familiar, the teacher participants began to be able to move into a more co-inquiry stance with me. In this example, Claire joins me in the critical analysis of the problem in a way that doesn't feel like I'm instructing or even reminding her of something she already knows. Instead, it feels like the two of us are re-examining the root causes.

Bill: The transitions (between classes)... recently, you said, that was something that you were feeling like administration was scrutinizing.

Claire: ... On our case about. Yeah, but only because that was what the network was scrutinizing.

Bill:which is something that happens in systems like this, right? Somebody says to somebody below them, "Do this better." Then that person says to the person below them, "Do this better." Right? Then it goes down the chain.

Claire: Right. Then it gets told to us, and then we say to the kids, "I'm not going to let you embarrass me in the hallway, so you need to get yourself together or we're not leaving."

The problem I've posed here is really more of first inserting my own structural analysis, and then asking if she agreed - reframing the problem to be more critical, and then posing it back to her. I think it's important to juxtapose this approach of problem posing with cognitive coaching (Edwards & Newton, 1995) an induction coaching pedagogy that uses questioning, and is built on the idea that teachers know how to solve their own problems, if they were only given time. Where I think this diverges from a cognitive coaching approach is that this problem posing applies a critical, analytical lens to the problem, and the action that a teacher might decide to take carries with it that critical analysis.

Another technique that I used in the critical sense-making phase was taking a challenging problem that the teacher participant was struggling with and comparing it to a parallel example that I know the teacher participant would be familiar with, as a way of depersonalizing the problem and helping them see a way out. An example of this can be seen in a Critical Dialogue with Olivia previously seen in Chapter 5:

Olivia: I have an AUSL coach, she's coming tomorrow, and she's going to be looking to see if kids are chewing gum. And they will be, because I don't enforce it. She's going to be looking to see if kids still have their sweaters on. They probably will because.. I don't see it. It's nerve wracking, because when she sees that kind of stuff, she thinks I'm regressing or not listening to what she's saying, or wondering if this is the right place for me. There's so much judgment.

Bill: On the one hand you're kind of playing the game, and on the other hand, you're kind of resisting the game. Which is what the kids do too. There's this critical thinking piece that you're doing (with her kids, about the rules, themselves) that doesn't feel like the AUSL

folks are doing. They're not having that critical conversation where they're like, "These rules are kind of bullshit, but they're kind of important too."

The parallel that I'm trying to spotlight here – as a way of facilitating critical sense-making – is comparing the experience Olivia is having (being seen by her AUSL coach as not listening, defiant) to a similar experience Olivia's students have had with her this year (*"Which is what the kids do, too etc."*). As a teacher, Olivia has seen her kids resist her and appear to not be "listening" to her – the very things she's worried the AUSL coach will think to be true about her. I am trying to draw on Olivia's critical awareness of why kids act that way in those moments - not necessarily because they aren't listening, and probably more likely because they feel silenced and not part of the process. I prompt Olivia to try to empathize in that moment, and see the other side of what she feels with her AUSL coach. This technique, I think, deepened our critical analysis of the situation that she had found herself in, and helped her to depersonalize it, in hopes of giving her some agency to make positive change.

4) Stretching Critical Practice

The stretching critical practice phase operates from the assumption that the teacher participants (and the teacher educator) are unfinished, and must continue to improve as teachers. It is an opportunity for the new urban teacher and the teacher educator to apply the critical theoretical knowledge co-learned in the program to the complexity of the work in front of them, and *stretch* their understanding of what it means to be a critically-oriented urban teacher. In my work with the teacher participants, I found this phase of the cycle to be the most challenging but also the phase where the most growth occurred.

One method that I used during this phase was to remind the teacher participant of their critical roots and beliefs while examining a phenomenon, pushing them out of a stuck moment where hegemonic socialization may have been influencing their analysis of an element in their teaching; in these moments, the problem-posing pedagogy continued to be effective. The example below shows how Claire was able to stretch from simply understanding a local, specific example to making a more broader realization about her overall practice:

Claire: Yeah. I think in the beginning I was like, " I'm going to be one of those people, who 10 years in I'm going to have it all figured out. I'm going to have all the curriculum set in the summer. I'm going to know exactly where I'm going," and I'm just realizing that that's not what actually makes good planning and good curriculum because I was able to have a really great conversation with kids about Beyonce's performance at the Super Bowl that fit perfectly into our unit but didn't actually ... I never would have planned it.

I was thinking about that in the same way that the last time we talked I had talked to you about weaving in what was going on with the University of Missouri. How like you can't actually plan for things that are happening in real life and yet those are some of the most meaningful things. These kids are researching the stuff on personal expression and here we go Beyonce just dropped this video and then performed it at the Super Bowl and then had all this backlash and the police are saying that they're not going to protect her at her concerts. Then Kendrick Lamar performs at the Grammy's In chains and how is he expressing himself through music and what is the story that he's telling and how does that mesh with the conversation that's happening about these award shows being so white all the time.

Bill: So what's the lesson there? You started by saying I've gotten more comfortable with not being perfect essentially. You're also saying something about the need for planning to be flexible and responsive to the very relevant things that are happening day to day that you can't plan for, so what's ...

Claire: I think it's all a part of the same vein around this idea that teaching and learning is a process that has to exist in something outside of a written curriculum or a textbook. It actually has to do with the real world context and that's what makes learning meaningful and we can't plan for those things. It doesn't mean that planning isn't important but if we get so stuck on 'this is the plan that I'm going to have and this is how it's going to be meaningful' we're missing the larger picture of what's actually going on in the world.

In this dialogue, we see Claire draw on the previous Critical Dialogues as a starting place for reflection, noting the way she has changed or grown as a planner since the beginning of the year. Additionally, you see an example of how I posed a question – “So what’s the lesson there?” - and tied it to a synthesis of the two aspects of her planning practice that she had just named for herself raising here. I believe this leads Claire, in response to the posed problem, to declare a belief about her emerging planning practice that is based on critical reflection. This kind of critical reflection - where a teacher compares her present moment beliefs against a backdrop of related theory and previous beliefs – can strengthen their critical teaching practice. Teachers may be able to do this type of reflection on their own,

but I think this is an example of how Critical Dialogue accelerates and strengthens that reflective practice in teachers.

Sometimes the stretching critical practice phase in the Praxis cycle pushed the teacher participants out of their comfort zones. At times, I challenged the participants to stay rooted in critical and dialogic approaches even when their initial instinct may have been to abandon those approaches. In this example, Tiffany reflects on how she “dropped” an opportunity to teach into some racial tension between her Black and Latinx students, and I push her to reconsider.

Tiffany: Because these are issues of race, of police violence, these are things I think are very delicate to a lot of the kids. It made me think how important it is to be able to establish that culture where we're able to talk about it before we can (actually talk about it) .

Bill: Right, how do you do that?

Tiffany: I don't know. I mean, I just dropped it.....there's a lot of racial tension in my second sixth grade class.

Bill: In what form?

Tiffany: I mean one of my kids told this other girl, she's like, "Fake hair head ass." In my fifth grade, I've had kids say, "Go back to Africa."

Bill: Wow.

Tiffany: I feel like talking about issues of race within that context, I don't think it would be seen as a safe place for some of the students. I feel like I would like to begin to build in those spaces where we can feel comfortable with one another and explore them in a safer way before we jump into this. Some of this stuff is pretty heavy for a lot of kids.

Bill: I think you're right and I think the question for me is “how do you soften the blow?” There's a way to think about it where simply beginning to do it is how you build the comfort. At the same time, the risk is, “I'll never have the right context for doing this” and as a result...end up not doing it. I wonder if you did that a little bit more, you can begin to open kids up?

Tiffany: I think I need to look into that and dedicate a couple of, I don't know... days? Everything is just so fucking hard in 45 minutes.

Bill: You've spent a lot of time building relationships. You've spent a lot of time trying to establish routines and procedures and create mathematical language and discourse. That points out in some ways how absent then the critical lens is to those things. You're just trying to figure out ways to introduce it.

- Tiffany: I'd like to...I thought a lot about it. I just-
- Bill: You already did. What's the difference between this and careers in mathematics? Why was that easier to do than any of these things?
- Tiffany: What do you mean? Why is it easier to get kids to talk about careers?
- Bill: Yeah, because you already did that. I'm just saying you decided to deviate from strict math instruction to build a context of real world mathematics and careers was the context you chose.
- Tiffany: I guess I think that made sense because the kids could talk about what they liked. It's just safer. It's way safer.
- Bill: That's right.
- Tiffany: That made sense. They could talk about their parents. I had so many kids who were like, "My parents know about this. My parents are willing to help me."
- Bill: Race is one of those things that's off the table in society, but we need to find ways of putting it back on.

I think this dialogue snippet shows the influence of key criteria for effective Critical Dialogue Partnerships, including the mutual trust we've established and the shared knowledge we have from her time at UTEP. And it's worth pointing out that it's not only Tiffany's critical practice that is being "stretched" in this Critical Dialogue, but both of ours. In trying to answer the question about when and how to engage kids in discussions of race in a 6th grade math class, we were both stretching our own understanding of what critical math practice looks like.

In using a problem posing pedagogy to stretch Tiffany's critical practice, I count five questions that I asked in the first few exchanges, pushing her to stay committed to a critical practice that would be easier to ignore. I also see how I tried to build from previous successful examples of critical teaching, specifically the real world math and careers unit she'd taught earlier that year. I believe that I brought up the "careers in Math" project that she'd successfully completed to remind her that she'd felt good about previously deviating from the curriculum to teach a unit on math careers. This reminder of what she has already done may have helped her see that the seemingly impossible challenge in front of her was more possible. I used a similar approach with Philip.

- Philip: Because I think if you just do ... this (Philip is pointing to the December Prompt that has a number of recent events in the city and in the world; see Appendix B), I think it scares a lot of people because you don't know how people are going to react, and that's scary. If I just brought up Laquan McDonald in my class all of the sudden, people would be like, 'What the fuck are you talking about? Oh shit. We're getting into some shit right now.' We're not set up for that in a lot of ways. I still don't know how to engage in that stuff in a math class.
- Bill: But you know how to do emotions in a math class (the emotions log curriculum Philip created)
- Philip: Yeah, that's what I do know how to do. That's the sort of stuff that you can apply to any situation.
- Bill: But talking about Laquan McDonald, the injustice there, talking about emotions here. To me, neither of those things have obvious math connections, but you've found a way to bring the thing that you know something about into math, and make it mathematical. Which I think is ... I feel like what you are doing, you're not just saying, 'We're going to teach math and then we're going to have an emotions conversation.' You're saying, 'No, there's mathematics here and I'm going to put that forward, and make you accountable on that and teach you that.' It's a vehicle to teach about these important social issues. One of which is that in our society we don't talk about emotions.
- Philip: That is a social justice issue, in my mind.
- Bill: I totally agree.
- Philip: I think it's also bringing down gender stereotypes.
- Bill: I think so too.
- Philip: In terms of having males talk about it, you could argue that.
- Bill: I think you'd have a very good argument, for sure. You're transcending that in some ways, or defying those norms.
- Philip: With males, I want to push them this agenda, so to speak.

One challenge of 'stretching critical practice' is making sure to not use dialogue as a 'technique for manipulation' (Shor and Freire, 1987), forcing Philip to create math units on topics like the CPD homicide of Laquan McDonald. At the same time, this was a moment where I felt it was important to

stretch Philip's critical practice by linking his new challenge to a successful example of where his teaching was more critical (e.g. the Emotions Log).

These two dialogues show the potential of critical dialogic partnerships to push teachers and teacher educators, alike, to think more complexly about how to teach critically, to take the topics that matter to us and to our students and find ways to stretch ourselves beyond what we conceive of 'curriculum' to a richer, more complex, relevant, critical dialogic curriculum.

Another method I sometimes used with the teacher participants to stretch their critical practice was tapping into my own funds of knowledge, the stories of my classroom and teacher educator experience. I occasionally shared these to try to help make meaning of a dilemma that a participant was bringing to the dialogue.

Bill: I know from my own experience, working with people who we were on the same page generally about these issues, but (there were times when) they would raise certain questions about...things that I was so sure I was right on. Then they would say, "Well, think about it this way too."

An example that comes to mind is...A big, eye-opening moment for me was when the older staff of color under my school were like, "We don't want kids wearing hats in school." We were like, all the white liberal folks were like, "What's the big deal? kids can wear whatever they want, who cares?" They were like, "No, to us that's a symbol." They were older too and they were saying some things around culture and around neighborhood stuff that they've had experienced that the hat was a symbol of. They were like, "This is a message that we want to bring about this." We were like, "That makes total sense so let's do it that way."

Those kinds of moments were really helpful for me. Expanding my view of what social justice meant. To be not only sort of a very clear cut answer, but how you take into consideration everybody's perspective and still hold on to your own values and push people sometimes to be like, "Okay, I see that point, but think about it this way too." That wasn't a conflict. It just expanded my thinking.

Claire: I'm sure there are things like that but I just I'm not paying attention to them. But I probably will now.

The power of stories - the participants' and mine - as a form of constructing knowledge is an example of 'teacher lore,' part of a counternarrative of teacher education research that expands the

natural history of teaching, and challenges the supremacy of academic theory over the on-the-ground lived experiences of teachers and teacher educators (Ayers & Schubert, 1992). By integrating two funds of knowledge - theory and stories - into our analysis of the lives of the participants, we deepened our developing definitions of critical teaching.

5) Committing to the Attainable and Aspirational

Praxis is incomplete without some sort of action; the fifth phase during the Critical Dialogue was a commitment to action that each of us would carry forward into our separate work between dialogues. For the teacher participant, these were actions they might take in their critical classroom practice or their dialogic relationships with members of their school community. For me, this meant committing to actions I might take in my teacher education practice, in my classroom induction support of each participant, or in my planning for the next Critical Dialogue. We can see an example of this in the end of the earlier story of stretching Tiffany's critical math teaching...

Tiffany: That made sense. They could talk about their parents. I had so many kids who were like, "My parents know about this. My parents are willing to help me."

Bill: Race is one of those things that's off the table in society, but we need to find ways of putting it back on.

Tiffany: Yeah, I feel like the other thing is that if I were to do something like that, I would have to be able to talk to the parents about what was going on too. It's definitely important to have that. You know what I mean?

Bill: For sure.

Tiffany: I would like to be able to do something like that. (Pause) One of the things I was thinking about was getting kids to look at a lot of the data when it comes up to ratio and proportions and actually analyzing a lot of the data using what they've learned in math...

Tiffany begins with an aspirational commitment ("I would like to be able do something like that") that quickly becomes a concrete, attainable step in the next sentence ("One of the things I was thinking about was getting kids..."). It's worth noting that she did not need - in this instance, at least - prompting by me, or some sort of structured protocol in order to commit to taking action. In this dialogue, she

moved from not knowing whether she was comfortable teaching into the racial issues in her classroom, to recognizing that she could, and finally to making a commitment to herself that she would try, with a concrete action step in mind.

Claire, in her June reflection on the year's Critical Dialogues, provides another example of committing to a next step coming out of the "Naming and Validating Success" (phase 2 in the Praxis cycle).

Claire: Then, to step back and say, "Okay, if that's a success, what did I do to create that success? What were the things that led to it? How can I continue to do those things going forward?"

Bill: Good.

Claire: I think that those were some of the things that ... Honestly, it just re-framed my attitude a little bit, even if I was getting frustrated. I could see that there were these good things that were happening.

Bill: It's a good boost to that ...

Claire: Yeah, and when we were talking earlier about having confidence with what you're doing. Part of it is just being confident in the choices that you're making. To have you telling me that, actually, these things that you're thinking are terrible, are actually normal. The things that you're thinking are, "Okay," are actually pretty successful. That made me more confident in who I was and what I was doing, which helped me to do more of those things.

The type of commitment that Claire comes to on her own here is not a concrete step, as we saw with Tiffany, but something more abstract; naming it for herself as "reframed my attitude." This is an example of an aspirational (re)commitment to the critical and dialogic practices Claire believes in, and this (re)commitment to one's critical beliefs could be an important step in resisting hegemonic socialization. I would say that both of these examples - Tiffany's attainable commitment and Claire's aspirational (re)commitment are both reasonable final steps in the Praxis cycle of Critical Dialogue.

In terms of process, arriving at a commitment - to concrete attainable actions or aspirational reframing of beliefs - was informal. We did not list out action steps nor did we assign ourselves measurable outcomes to prove that we'd met said commitments. In my analysis of the twenty dialogues, no consistent pattern is evident for how we arrived at next steps, but there is evidence of commitment,

nonetheless. In light of this analysis, it's worth considering whether or not this was a shortcoming of the Critical Dialogic Partnership. Perhaps a more formal goal-setting and assessment process together would have strengthened our work. Still, with the informal, organic process of committing to the attainable and aspirational, the teacher participants came to these commitments on their own, and in their own words.

6) Between Critical Dialogues

At the end of each Critical Dialogue, and with commitments in mind, each teacher participant and I returned to our daily work. One task I undertook between Critical Dialogues was planning for the next Critical Dialogue by transcribing the previous Critical Dialogue, analyzing it for themes, and planning problems to pose around the themes that I thought relevant to helping the teacher participants continue to examine their critical and dialogic approaches.

After Critical Dialogue #2 (and then again after Critical Dialogue 3 and 4), I sent the transcript of the previous Critical Dialogue to the teacher participant a week or two prior to their next Critical Dialogue, and asked them to look through it and come prepared to talk about what stood out to them. The teacher participants gravitated to this opportunity to revisit what they had said the last time. For example, Philip said:

I like it. I think it's a chance to reflect... when I read the critical dialogue that you sent, it reminded me of all these things I had said and then all these things that have happened since. It was a nice reflective piece and then to see okay, have I grown or have I done that things that I wanted to do, that I set out to do. In a lot of ways, I have and in a lot of ways I haven't. It's interesting to see what have you done, what have you not done.

This is a part of the Praxis cycle that I would formalize in future research and practice. I found that when the teacher participants came with themes or highlights from the transcripts, the conversations were a little more rooted in broader analysis of their practice, rather than the specific, present moment of that day or that week. I believe the open dialogue to be an important part of the Critical Care aspects of the overall Praxis cycle, but I think that prompting teachers to look at their own reflections over time can be impactful toward improvement, and make them even more likely to have a critical focus on their reflection-in-action, not just during their reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983; Zeichner and Liston, 2014).

Another aspect of my work “Between Critical Dialogues” was coaching the teacher participants fairly regularly in their classroom as part of my UTEP responsibilities. I found that the focus for that work was much more about the technical aspects of teaching, based on the moments of practice that I was present for; I found it more difficult, for many reasons, to fully extend and enact the dialogic Critical Care that the teacher participants had come to count on. Sometimes the teacher participants sought out that connection between Critical Dialogues via text message, phone calls and social media. Tiffany mentioned:

I'd feel cool texting you, like “Ah, Bill, I'm so upset right now” or something. Even you just saying, “Are you okay?” Is really nice. When I was going through all that stuff..(you reached out to say) “I haven't heard from you in a little while. Are you okay? What's going on? Let me know if there's anything I can do.”

I think this points to the ongoing nature of dialogic Critical Care, whether that's between a teacher and kid, between a teacher and other members of a school community, or, as in this case, between teacher educator and new teacher. Relationships exist outside of the primary space of schools; in my research, this meant that the Care went beyond researcher and subject.

Finally, another aspect of what took place between dialogues was that the teacher participants found that they were anticipating the next Critical Dialogue; this anticipation kept them reflective, critically aware, and more committed to dialogue in their day-to-day teaching. Philip describes:

I think that's an interesting piece....knowing that somebody's going to ask you in a few months, what the fuck have you been doing? You know what I mean?

I think that is an important piece in and of itself, knowing that that's going to happen. Not saying that there's like a grade or anything, but knowing that I'm going to have a conversation with somebody about what's going on in the classroom, makes you think about what you're doing in your classroom.

While I'm pretty sure that I never asked a participant “What the fuck have you been doing?”, Philip's point was an interesting one, in terms of how the promise of a critical dialogic partnership informed his day-to-day teaching. The commitment to meeting again created - for Philip, at least - a sense of accountability that he found “important, in and of itself.”

The Context of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships

I designed this study about Critical Dialogue Partnerships with two major assumptions in mind; first, that critical reflection and dialogue would be easier for new teachers if the partnership took place away from any institution – K-12 school or university. The second assumption was that the dialogue partnership with an instructor and advisor from the participants’ teacher education program would have a number of benefits. After analyzing the data from the twenty critical dialogues, I see evidence that supports these two assumptions, though I acknowledge that these conclusions are subject to confirmation bias. Below is my analysis of the participants’ comments about each of these two key elements of the study’s design.

The Location - Meeting in a Third Space

Dedicated specifically to the Critical Dialogue between teacher participant and teacher educator, the third space that was constructed with each participant as part of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships led the participants to note feelings of safety and vulnerability, trust, and openness that facilitated critical reflection. All four teacher participants named that meeting away from the school classroom allowed them some distance from the complex, tiring work of classroom teaching, which could limit their ability to engage in critical reflection. Claire names why trying to reflect in the classroom, as part of a school day, would have been much more challenging.

Bill: What created the context for that to happen? Was it the meeting outside of the physical space?

Claire: I think it was meeting outside of the physical space. ...If you came to social studies with me until the end of the day, at that point ...

Bill: Your brain was fried.

Claire: Yeah. There wasn't a lot, I was just happy not to have children in front of me. ...

The teacher participants - with hopes of being reflective and engaged in critical analysis - were glad to step away from the classroom and school, both of which were sometimes reminders of all of the missteps and mistakes that inevitably come with one’s first year of teaching.

Bill: Is there something about kind of coming out of the space too and ...talking?

Olivia: Yeah. I can't even work there. I have so many bad experiences there. Our room is hot at the end of the day. It smells bad. It's messy. I have a headache. There's trash all over the floor, the room is trashed. I'm the only one to clean it up.. I don't want to be there any longer than I have to. It's so sad that I'm thinking that ... My first year. I haven't even been there a year yet and I already can't even stand to be there.

The messages that school environments communicate to teachers are one way hegemonic socialization can be transmitted. Hierarchical insistence on environmental uniformity (e.g. classroom setup, hallway bulletin boards) encourages conformity and diminishes individual professional decision-making power. The teacher participants' schools each lacked adult-appropriate professional learning spaces or resources, which passively communicates an institutional indifference toward professional growth and improvement. As an urban classroom teacher, I may have eaten lunch with my students to build relationships and demonstrate critical care, but I would have appreciated the option of private staff-only bathrooms, healthy food options, and clean work spaces - aspects of an environment that demonstrate professional respect.

I believe that for the teacher participants, conducting our critical dialogues in a quiet coffee shop or bar contributed to a humanizing approach to our partnership. These third spaces allowed them to feel physically and emotionally comfortable and professionally respected; these spaces also deemphasized our hierarchical positionality as mentor and mentee. Those roles were, of course, still present - context shift did not wipe that away completely. But meeting in a third space that is neither theirs nor mine created the physical distance that positioned the teachers to be more vulnerable and honest, necessary criteria, in my mind, for Critical Dialogue.

The Partner - Meeting with a Trusted, Critical Ally

Another key element of the context of the Critical Dialogic Partnership was the role of the partner and the relationship of the partner to the teacher participant. One important criteria named by the teacher participants, and articulated below by Olivia, was that I was not the teacher participants' boss or someone with evaluative responsibility or the power to fire them.

Olivia: (The AUSL Coach) was watching me do something I wasn't good at yet, and critiquing me and saying things to make me better but probably thinking worse things, and it was very, very stressful.

Bill: So, you could say the same argument about me. I watched you...

Olivia: No, it was different.

Bill: Say how.

Olivia: You don't work for AUSL, so you weren't going to report me to my principal. I didn't feel any pressure to say certain things or act a certain way. I don't talk to a lot of the teachers at my school about what's going on there because I don't know who's safe to talk to. I don't know what's okay and what's not. I don't know who's going to report to who so I don't say anything

The significance of *who I was not* was balanced with the significance of *who I was*. As a former instructor in their teacher education program, the teacher participants and I had shared experiences that we could draw from, including shared knowledge and a shared language about critical teaching and learning. This made it possible to reference approaches to teaching and re-orient ourselves when exploring a teaching and learning dilemma. As Tiffany said, "There is that system that I learned about in UTEP. There are these things that we keep harping upon. That's important. You can get so stuck in the everyday funk."

Another aspect I brought to the partnership was the trust already built with each teacher participant, developed as his or her advisor and instructor during the two years of preservice at UTEP.

Tiffany, again, said:

You were my advisor. I feel like I can say things and it's a very open relationship. I feel like we can talk about a lot of things. I can express my frustrations and my concerns and my weaknesses and my strengths and all of those things all together. I think is really rarely important. I don't know if I found that with anybody else that's not this. You know what I mean?

The participants also named the importance of my experience as both a classroom teacher and as a teacher educator as helpful aspects of the Critical Dialogue Partnership; Olivia described it this way:

Yeah, well I don't know if it's suppose to do this but it really helps me a lot to be able to kind of vent frustrations and talk about what I know I need to do better to someone that's in education.

I can talk about this to my sister all day long but she's not going to be able to get it because she's an event planner. My mom was in education but it was back when schooling was very, very different. Just super old school.. So I can vent to her but now she hates my administration because I talk so much shit about them..... There's sometimes that she says “you should do this” or “you need to do this better,” but for the most part ...it's very one sided ...

I can't really talk to my fiance (also a classroom teacher) about really struggling to manage these kids ... I mean I could but he's really, really good at it and I don't feel comfortable saying ... not comfortable, I just don't want to go there.

These assets - both who I was and who I was not - are a commentary on and a challenge to the criticism levied on traditional teacher induction and teacher education. Induction coaches often do not have a shared understanding of how their teacher was educated or prepared. Teacher education programs are not always immersed in the work and the context of where their graduates are teaching. I bring both of these aspects to the role of Critical Dialogue Partner.,

Conclusion

The entire Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships - the five phases “During Critical Dialogues,” the actions “between Critical Dialogues” and the context of both where and with whom the Critical Dialogues were taking place - is a complex, layered process. As a supplement to in-classroom induction coaching, this Praxis cycle moved teachers to re-center their critical and dialogic beliefs and practices and helped them negotiate the hegemonic socialization they encountered in their first year of teaching in an urban school community.

The Praxis Cycle of the Critical Dialogue Partnership was it's own process, specific to this project and to the four teacher participants in their first year of teaching. The knowledge created through the Critical Dialogues had a primary goal of helping the four teacher participants develop new and deeper knowledge about how to make their first year of teaching in CPS more deeply critical and dialogic. It hoped to help the four teacher participants stay grounded in their beliefs about Curricular Standpoint and Critical Care and resist the hegemonic socialization being transmitted by the various stakeholders of their CPS classroom, schoolhouse and community.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATIONS

In this final chapter, I present some discussion of the big takeaways of this study, beginning with some reflections about the way that the Critical Dialogue Partnerships inspired reciprocal learning for me, as a teacher educator and education researcher, that went beyond the original intentions of the project. Specifically, what I learned about the teacher participants' challenges enacting a dialogic critical care as first year teachers and how that clashed with some of their preservice UTEP learning. I then share some considerations about what this study has taught me about urban teacher education and teacher induction. I then discuss the limitations of the study in three areas – my role as researcher, the study design, and the potential ongoing learning of the participants before sharing some conclusions about the study.

Reciprocal Learning from the Critical Dialogue Partnerships

The stated intended purpose of the Critical Dialogue Partnerships was to create dialogic opportunities for the participants to critically reflect on their own work as new urban teachers. However, during this study, the partnerships raised unexpected questions for me and generated new knowledge about how to effectively prepare teachers, including some specific ideas on how improve the preservice instruction of UTEP. There were a number of examples where this occurred, and I expand on one of those in detail below.

Questioning the UTEP Teaching of Critical Care Toward Kids of Color

During the study, all four teacher participants spoke repeatedly about how their experience creating caring classroom communities and individual relationships as first year teachers sometimes clashed with what they believed they were taught about those same topics when they were teacher candidates in UTEP. Each participant shared in detail about this topic, in both unsolicited and solicited anecdotes.

The dissonance the teacher participants experienced appeared to center on where certain classroom management practices fell on a continuum between what they saw as either oppressive or liberatory practices toward kids of color in urban schools. A frequent, specific set of questions emerged about the appropriateness of using classroom wide behavior management systems and strict and

authoritative commands (e.g. telling kids “no” or to “sit down”). The participants found themselves wondering if these practices were examples of harmful oppressive behavior toward students of color or if they were examples of a more complex and nuanced notion of critical care.

At first, I wondered if the teacher participants’ dissonance and uncertainty was evidence of some shifting beliefs that occurs when one moves from the scaffolded and more theoretical experience of student teaching to the concrete reality of designing and running one’s own classroom. In the last decade, I have seen and worked with a number of new teachers who felt the need to abandon their idealistic beliefs about building caring classroom communities and moved to a more authoritative classroom management approach that relies on behavior management systems, an increase in consequences, and a more direct and stricter presence and tone. This may have been what was happening with Tiffany, as she describes in this anecdote from the middle of the year.

Tiffany: I've also found that I've become way more like, "No, sit down. Sit down. You don't have an option right now. Sit down.", and really thinking about the way that I'm phrasing that, and the tone of voice, because I realized in listening to recordings of myself, and listening to other teachers sometimes, even the way your voice will swing up at the end of something makes it sound like-

Bill: Asking for permission?

Tiffany: Yeah. I've been really conscious about that.

Bill: Wait, talk about that for a second. That's another conscious choice.

Tiffany: Yeah. Even with Francisco. We can joke around with one another. The other day I told him to sit back in his seat because he was in some other seat, and he was like, "No.", and I was like, "No, you don't have a choice.", and I walked up to him and was like, "You need to go sit in your seat.", and he did this to me (made a move like he was going to hit Tiffany). I was like, "Go.", and then he went and sat down. I was like, "Oh my god, this is too much." I don't know. That would have freaked me out so much at the beginning of the school year.

Bill: Why? Say something about why the shift.

Tiffany: A kid basically more or less doing this (acting like he was going to hit) to me.

Bill: A kid that's physically bigger than you?

Tiffany: Yeah. Now that I know him a little bit more, (I know) he's not going to actually hurt me. I don't feel that threat from him. It's more like he needs to save face kind of a thing. I need to allow some room for that in this. I think at the beginning of the year I just would have been like, "I don't even know why I have to get up in his face like that. Shouldn't he just listen if I'm stern enough?" But body language, things like that have never come that easily, especially that sort of body language. That part is getting easier.

But in one of the final two Critical Dialogues, each of the teacher participants raised their shifts in classroom management beliefs and practices against the backdrop of what they learned in UTEP. In Claire's case, the dissonance surrounded her use of a classroom-wide management system that included consequences for students getting up out of their seats without permission, and other classroom management issues that weren't being solved through building individual relationships and designing instruction from a curricular standpoint.

Bill: You were raising an interesting point about the theoretical idea of being oppressive toward kids that you learned at UTEP, versus providing structure that is informed by your actual work and the knowledge of the community folks that you're working with. You felt a need to fill in the gap there, right?

Claire: Because if you look at it, what's more oppressive? You can look at the difference between my eighth-grade class, it kind of came together and it kind of didn't. But not to the same extent that some of my other classes did. So if you look at that, what's more oppressive is that those kids are leaving me without some of the deep, critical conversations that my sixth graders have had and my seventh graders have had, that are preparing them to be thinkers about the world that they live in, and to raise questions about how they're treated in the world that they live in based on who they are, and able to say, critically question, whether or not they're getting books and information that reflects them. My sixth graders are really good at that now because we've had a lot of open conversations about those things. So what's more oppressive - they're expected to sit down and not just roam free? or they're not getting educated in the way they deserve to be?

Claire's argument here seems to be that critical teaching was only possible for her once she finally initiated a system. She points to how the class that she struggled most with - the 8th graders - didn't receive the same critical teaching as her other classes because "it kind of came together and it kind of didn't" as justification for why she made those moves that she initially rejected as oppressive.

It led me to wonder if the teacher participants' experience as a child in school might have an impact on what they considered to be oppressive practice toward kids. Olivia and Philip both grew up in Chicago and went to Chicago Public Schools, and their experience with institutional behavior management practices, like being required to walk in quiet lines may have meant that they were not shocked to see this behavior as teacher candidates. During their experience at UTEP, they were challenged to question these practices, but in some cases, their lived experience had a greater influence on their teaching practices than their teacher education program.

Olivia: UTEP was – “you as the teacher, it’s never the kids fault.” And I’m not saying it’s *always* the kids fault, but I’m saying it takes two. I never took anything out on a kid, ever, but kids need to be held accountable, they need to hold themselves accountable. I feel like UTEP spent a lot of time, telling teachers they need to be better, do better, but those same things need to be told to kids so they can hold themselves to a higher standard. Kids should get more chances, we should be more lenient, you should warn and remind them more, but they still need to be held to a higher standard. I don’t think UTEP got that.

Olivia: I remember when ... I don't remember what class it was (in UTEP), but we were talking about....and everybody was on the same page and I didn't want to say anything, but I was conflicted... but they were like, "Yeah, walking in lines. That's school to prison pipeline training," like they're training them ... And everybody in the program who is very smart, were just saying, "These kids walking in line is awkward, horrible. Their hands are behind their backs and they look like they're going to a jail and that's just terrible," but I just disagree. I fundamentally don't agree with that.

Bill: Say why. What do you think-

Olivia: Because from a management- I went to a school where we had to do that, like far southside, and we had to walk with our arms folded and look at the person's head in front of us, and be 100% silent in the halls, and it was because that's how you manage, that's how you get them in line, that's how you keep them in line. Why should they talk in the hall?

Olivia has revealed, here, the ways that her own elementary schooling experiences in CPS clashed with the curriculum of UTEP and the socially constructed knowledge of her cohort mates, in terms of what it means to have students walking in lines in schools. Philip also attended CPS and also taught in Detroit before coming to UTEP, so he brings two experiences of schooling where walking in

lines and using authoritative management of individual students may have been viewed to be appropriate and sanctioned.

Philip: I feel like the impression that I got (at UTEP) was if you discipline a kid or you get angry with them, it's my whiteness being pressed on them. That's the only way you can look at it. And that really fucked with my head. It's like, "Wait, so I can't correct these kids when I know they're wrong? Or are they not wrong and I'm wrong, and that's through my white lens, and I'm judging them, and that's why I'm correcting them?" It's like, "Wait, ah."

I think I doubted, not just questioned, but doubted everything that I thought I know. You temporarily fucked with my head there, just the idea that, "Can I yell at a kid?" Or, "Can I get angry with a kid," or tell them, "No, that's not the right thing to do," while still having some cultural awareness.

Philip's racial identity plays a role here, as well (it did for Olivia, as well). I expect to see teachers check their identity as they question their beliefs and practices; Philip's whiteness should absolutely play a part in his reflection about whether or not his anger toward a student of color is racially motivated. And you can see the work is still going on; this, to me is a very powerful and positive development.

Philip's perception of what UTEP was teaching him (that disciplining a kid was his whiteness pressing on the child, and that is the only way to look at it) reportedly caused him to doubt everything that he knew, at least "temporarily." But he appears to have the critical consciousness to have not dismissed the importance of examining his whiteness. His notions of what it means to point out when a student is wrong is not stuck in either fully believing what he thought UTEP taught him or what his original experiences taught him, but instead that these ideas are always in need of examination, in praxis..

All of this feedback has raised questions for me, both as an instructor in UTEP and as a researcher looking at the hegemonic socialization of teachers. I wonder, for example, whether the enactment of a dialogic critical care by a first year teacher looks differently across time. Is it possible for new teachers to enact critical care when they are just getting to know students, building relationships of trust, connecting with parents, and trying to understand the needs of the community? How do new teachers create critical caring learning environments within a school that may, in some cases, have

existing oppressive schoolwide management practices or, in other cases, have unclear schoolwide management practices?

I'm left wondering if I should shift my current teacher education practice with future first year teachers in CPS. I wonder if they need a scaffolded set of approaches for their initial months or possibly years that look harsher and feel more authoritative than the dialogic critical care beliefs and practices they hope to bring into their first year of teaching. This leads me to question that if this shift occurs in the future preparation of UTEP teachers, will they then be able to pull those scaffolds back as they build caring and trusting relationships with individual students and families with/in their school communities.

I believe that this dilemma points to an unexpected consideration for what critical dialogue partnerships can do for teacher education programs – by building a supportive bridge from teacher education to teacher induction and supporting graduates, there is also an opportunity for reciprocal learning for teacher educators and their programs. It's likely that these opportunities are limited for teacher education programs that do not engage in research with their graduates..

Considerations for Teacher Education and Induction

Teacher Education

In terms of considering future teacher education work at UTEP and considerations for the teacher education field, more broadly I believe this study supports the importance and the power of dialogical practices. The hegemonic model of US schooling does not prioritize dialogue. Teacher education that foregrounds the learning of dialogic practices and critical analysis in a Freirean tradition create important learning experiences for future teachers who hope to engage in Critical Dialogue at their schools. Teacher education programs that create multiple opportunities for candidates to practice dialogue in the context of schools - in real classrooms, in real schoolhouses, and in/with real urban communities create conditions that will help graduates of their programs to practice dialogue in these contexts as full-time teachers.

Another consideration for teacher education – and a specific area of research that I hope to further pursue - is a further development of the “Stakeholder Dialogues,” described in Chapter 3. This specific

guided fieldwork teacher education experience can provide structured opportunities for members of a school community and teacher candidates to engage in meaningful, authentic dialogue about the needs and hopes of all members, and help generate future learning opportunities for all parties. The anecdotal feedback I've received from school stakeholders was that the experience of talking with teacher candidates helped them to think in new and powerful ways about teachers and about the importance of collaborative dialogue and problem solving within the urban school space. This demonstrates to me an area for future research that I hope to carry out in the future.

Teacher Induction

There are several considerations I've come away with for my work as an instructor in both preservice teacher education and postgraduate induction that I want to articulate here. One consideration, in terms of induction practice at UTEP, is that critical dialogue partnerships were useful as a supplement to my in-classroom practices of induction, but not a replacement. I have begun to engage the members of the Induction team at UTEP in discussions about what it might mean for each of them to engage in Critical Dialogue partnerships with the UTEP teachers they currently work with. A bimonthly Critical Dialogue Partnership would be insufficient support for a novice urban teacher on its own. Rather, I believe that Critical Dialogue Partnerships and the in-classroom coaching work in a dialectic; the generative themes of our critical dialogues came from both of us sharing common language and history about the classroom and the school and its stakeholders, many of whom I interacted with at some point during the year. There's no question that my familiarity with some small part of the experience of each participant's first year in the classroom had a deepening effect on our Critical Dialogue Practice. Dialectically, the reflection before, during and after, the anticipation of the following critical dialogue - informed, and hopefully improved - the teacher participant's work in their classroom, schoolhouse, and community.

Another consideration for the field of teacher induction is that the critical dialogue partnerships relied on the relationships and knowledge that the teacher participants and I developed during the pre-service years of UTEP. As I detailed in my introduction, I found it very challenging in my previous work

as an Induction Coach with NTC to engage novice teachers who had limited or no exposure to critical or dialogic theories and practices. Critical Dialogue Partnerships that begin without that trust and that shared knowledge would be much more difficult, I imagine.²⁵

Finally, a consideration for Teacher Induction is the notion that the pedagogy of an induction partnership, like the one documented in this study, is a space for ongoing teacher education through pedagogical consistency. The five phases of the Praxis Cycle that encompass the “During Critical Dialogues” (Open Dialogue, Naming and Validating Success, Critical Sense-Making, Stretching Critical Practice, Committing to the Attainable and Aspirational) were designed to be *pedagogically consistent* with the critical, dialogic pedagogy that the participants learned about at UTEP. Simply learning about pedagogy through reading and observing – common practices of teacher education – is often insufficient. Teacher candidates and graduates need ongoing opportunities to participate in these pedagogies if they are going to become comfortable practices.

I made it clear to the teacher participants throughout the Critical Dialogical Partnership that my pedagogical consistency was done intentionally in order to establish our work together as a co-constructed method or practice. I did not want the participants to perceive our work together as something being done to them, but, rather, that they were participating in it with me. I wanted to challenge the banking, approaches found in traditional teacher education and induction coaching, where the expert deposits the predetermined official knowledge about how to teach into the novice. Instead I made moves to center their critical and dialogic teaching practice between us, as the object to be known between the two subjects of knowing.

That being said, I used my “gnosiological” (Freire, 1973; Shor & Freire, 1987) experience in selecting the lenses by which we would examine their teaching - critical, dialogical - knowing from experience that the hegemonic socialization of urban schooling would likely push the teacher participants away from their critical and dialogical beliefs and practices toward a more banking approach. This balance is what Shor (1992) calls a “student-centered, teacher-directed process,” in which the students

discuss issues that are of importance, and the teacher listens, integrating and contextualizes issues related to the course, using problem posing.

Limitations to the Study

The Researcher

As discussed in several places throughout this dissertation, one of the key limitations to this study is the blurred line between researcher and participant in my positionality in the study. Drawing on the Freirean conception of dialogue (1970, 1973), I have attempted to create a horizontal relationship between the teacher participant and myself that deconstructs hierarchical modes of learning and creates opportunities for both members of the dialogue to create new knowledge. I recognize, however, that it is impossible to truly separate myself from the role of researcher, and, to less of a degree, the mentor in a mentoring relationship. My understanding of Freire's conception of dialogue recognizes that the teacher in the teacher/student dialectic comes with knowledge that the student does not yet have, so throughout the study, I tried to maintain a consciousness that truly horizontal positioning was not a goal.

However, I recognize that the participants likely still positioned themselves in such a way that their participation in our dialogues was influenced by my role as their former advisor, teacher educator instructor, and researcher. This limitation is further compounded by my social location. As a white man who also embodies a number of other dominant culture positions – e.g. cisgendered, heterosexual, middle class, able-bodied – I acknowledge the way that hegemonic socialization conditions individuals to attribute authority and power to me in these (and many other) circumstances. These aspects likely influenced and acted counter to my attempts to creating a more horizontal, dialogic dynamic throughout the Critical Dialogue Partnerships.

The Design

There are limitations to a reconceptualized induction process that moves outside of the classroom and outside of the school day. One challenge, given the extraordinary commitments teachers already have, is the perhaps privileged assumption that mentoring take place outside of paid work hours.

Similarly, the presumption that a teacher spend her own money as part of the process of mentoring/ induction again makes a leap that teachers have disposable income to engage in professional work.

Another limitation to the design is the assumption that Critical Dialogue Partnerships must include both the in-classroom coaching and outside of the classroom critical dialogue partnerships. One solution might be the intentional decoupling of the work of in-classroom mentorship and Critical Dialogue partnerships outside of the classroom. If graduate novice teachers are assigned an in-class mentor or receive some sort of traditional induction coaching at their school, teacher education programs might organize their support around the Critical Dialogue Partnerships, exclusively; Picower's research (2011) is an example of this model. Mills College in Oakland, for example, organizes professional development for their graduates around collaborative inquiry between teacher educators and their novice graduates, called Mills Teacher Scholars.

Additionally, Critical Dialogic Partnerships could include pairing a novice teacher with community based mentors, or participating in an inquiry group of mixed stakeholders at an urban school that focuses exclusively on critical analysis of the shared work of urban teaching.

The Ongoing Learning for the Four Teacher Participants

The scope of this dissertation project only covered the first year of teaching for the teacher participants. A limitation to this study is that the participants do not have ongoing opportunities for continued critical dialogue with a teacher educator. With the research ending after just one year, this study is limited in being able to speak to the impact on their ongoing practice as CPS teachers. If they have not found a dialogue partner, can they engage in a version of the Praxis Cycle with themselves? Has the absence of a Critical Dialogue Partnership this year affected their resistance to hegemonic socialization?

I also wonder about whether or not the Praxis cycle of our Critical Dialogue Partnerships is having a generative effect on their current work, in the same way that I describe it to be taking effect in my practice. My assumption is that it is likely having some generative effect, and that they may have begun Year 2 with new commitments - both attainable and aspirational - and that they are engaging in some Critical Dialogue Partnership practices with themselves, possibly with other mentors or teacher educators that they are working with.

Conclusion

This dissertation project grew out of a professional realization that the critical and dialogic practices taught at UTEP were being challenged by the system we were preparing teachers to enter. I wondered what it would take to help keep teachers rooted in these beliefs and practices as they left the teacher education program and became full-time teachers. Was a bridge needed to extend the critical and dialogic work going in preservice teacher education into the post-graduation teaching? The metaphor of a bridge between preservice teacher education and post-graduation teacher induction is still apt; after completing this project I am convinced that a strengthening on both sides of that bridge is what is necessary, and I do not believe that Critical Dialogic Partnerships should fall onto one side of the bridge or the other.

When I tell people - teachers, scholars, family members, friends and other non-educators - about this project, I often get asked the question “What makes you think new teachers should be or can be the ones to engage everyone else in critical dialogue?” Sometimes the skeptical emphasis is on the notion of Critical Dialogue, itself – why is it important to teaching and to schools? Why do we need it? Sometimes, I think, the skepticism is about the ‘new teacher’ being the one to initiate the critical dialogue. It sounds like they are really saying, “who does that new teacher think she is, questioning and wanting dialogue with people with more power than her? She should know her place, and wait her turn.” So to the question of “Why do you think new teachers should be trying to engage everyone else in critical dialogue?” I ask, “Why not?” Lisa Delpit (1995), in *Other People’s Children*, claims that teachers have opportunity, position, and power to reverse the silencing of dialogue:

Teachers are in an ideal position to play this role, to attempt to get all of the issues on the table in order to initiate true dialogue. This can only be done, however, by seeking out those whose perspectives may differ most, by learning to give their words complete attention, by understanding one's own power, even if that power stems merely from being in the majority, by being unafraid to raise questions about discrimination and voicelessness with people of color, and to listen, no, to hear what they say. I suggest that the results of such interactions may be the most powerful and empowering coalescence yet seen in the educational realm — for all teachers and for all the students they teach. (p. 47)

Teachers *are* in an ideal position. This dissertation is a suggestion for how teacher education can build a bridge to induction, and help critical teachers candidates continue to grow into critical teachers, grounding themselves in the theories and experiences of the past while making sense of the present and looking ahead and planning for the future

In the current context in which I write this Conclusion to my dissertation, mere weeks after the election of Trump, I sense the ways that we, as a society, may be facing an increase in the silencing of dissent, the obfuscation of the truth, and the desire to further marginalize critical analysis, especially in public schools. Those forces of domination have always been present in our society, just as there have been dialectic forces of resistance. But perhaps we're on the verge of really seeing a sharp increase in the silencing of dialogue. So to the world, to those people who silently question the premise of this project, to current and future teachers, I say that it's at this precise moment that critical dialogue is necessary! Of course the idea of critical dialogue, started by a teacher, is threatening! The status quo will always be threatened when people begin to dialogue, to question, to imagine something new.

In this dissertation, I've laid out a Praxis cycle that captures the Critical Dialogue Partnerships that I plan to use in the future and encourage others to, as well. This Praxis can help new teachers navigate their classrooms, schools, and school systems, helping them build from the critical knowledge and pedagogy that they bring and intertwining it with the knowledge of the many members of their urban school communities, who have plenty to teach them as novices in the profession. Critical Dialogue is part of what makes schools and communities into vibrant, democratic sites of caring and critical thinking. Getting us to that place requires a collective endeavor that includes all members of a school community - the kids, new and experienced teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and families, and the community members. It requires deep unlearning through critical examination of the ways that schools have historically socialized and reproduced the hegemonic status quo. This means everyone learning to teach and learn in ways that begin from the standpoint of the students and families at the center of the school, not depositing and then standardized-testing what a small group of people have determined to be the legitimate knowledge of our society. This also means learning to care - for individuals, classroom

communities, schools, and neighborhoods - in ways that honors and lifts everyone up, not sorting people into hierarchies that perpetuate inequity.

APPENDIX A: October Critical Dialogue Prompt

| Stakeholder | In Dialogue with? | If unidirectional, which way? | | If 'in dialogue with,' is it critical? |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Students | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Parents | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Colleagues | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Administrators | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Staff Members | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Community Members | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |
| Curriculum | Always Sometimes Rarely Never | You Stakeholder You | → → → ← | Stakeholder You Stakeholder |

Five Pillars of Effective Practice in Urban Schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2007)

| At the core of my practice this month | Never | Not often | Sometimes | Much of the time | Always |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|------------------|--------|
| Critically Conscious Purpose | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Duty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Preparation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Socratic Sensibility | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Trust | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX B: December Critical Dialogue Prompt

Education/Social Justice Events that have taken place in Chicago - in the community in which the schools sit - that are (culturally) relevant to the lives of students (a fundamental of critical pedagogy, of social-justice/anti-racist teaching):

| | Uttered / overheard in your classroom in any way, planned or unplanned? | Had intentions or plans to talk about this with students? | Plans led to critical dialogues with students? | | Uttered/overheard in your school amongst other stakeholders? (parents, fellow staff, admin, community) | Had intentions or plans to talk about this with school stakeholders parents, fellow staff, admin, community) | Plans led to a critical dialogue with a stakeholder |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Dyett Hunger Strike | | | | | | | |
| (not Chicago) Assault At Spring Valley High (girl dragged out of classroom by cop) | | | | | | | |
| 9 year old Tyshaun Lee killed in Auburn Clifton | | | | | | | |
| CTU November rally, possible strike looms, 5,000 teachers possibly cut | | | | | | | |
| Protests after LaQuan McDonald video is released; arrest of UTEP teacher Johnae Strong, author on my UTEP syllabus, Malcolm London | | | | | | | |
| Organizing and the release / charges dropped, Malcolm London | | | | | | | |
| The Black Friday shutdown of Michigan Ave shopping | | | | | | | |
| (again, not Chicago, but, still) - Planned Parenthood attack by white supremacist terrorist. | | | | | | | |
| The closing of UChicago on 11.30 due to online gun threat. | | | | | | | |
| Shootings in San Bernadino, CA | | | | | | | |
| Donald Trump | | | | | | | |

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