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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dimensions Everywhere

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Writing as Movement → Pursuit

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

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

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

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy + Dimensionality

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

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

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

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

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

Memories of Movement and Dimensionality: Memories of the Future

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

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 1

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

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

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

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

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

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 2

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

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

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

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

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 3

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

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 4

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

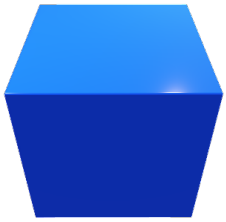
> Schools have been, and continue to be, shaped by the logics of racism and colonialism through practices of language, appearance, ways of knowing, representation, and so on. Sometimes it's nice to be among folks who don't need convincing about that. It saves time. I suspect that time is one of the main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

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

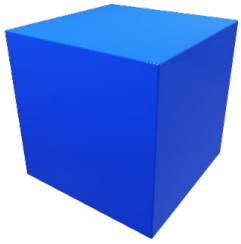
Memories of movement and dimensionality, 5

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

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



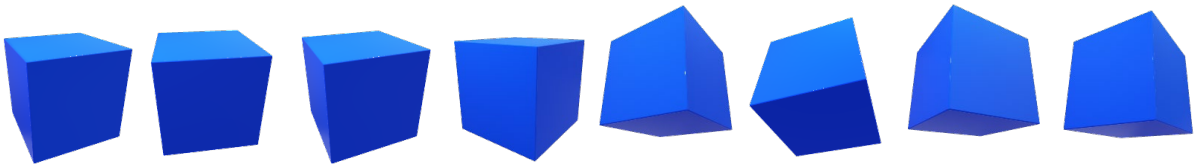
← Angle of application: Modality of teaching CRP explicitly + discussion, activities, assignments



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

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

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



Tesseract as Becoming

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

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

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

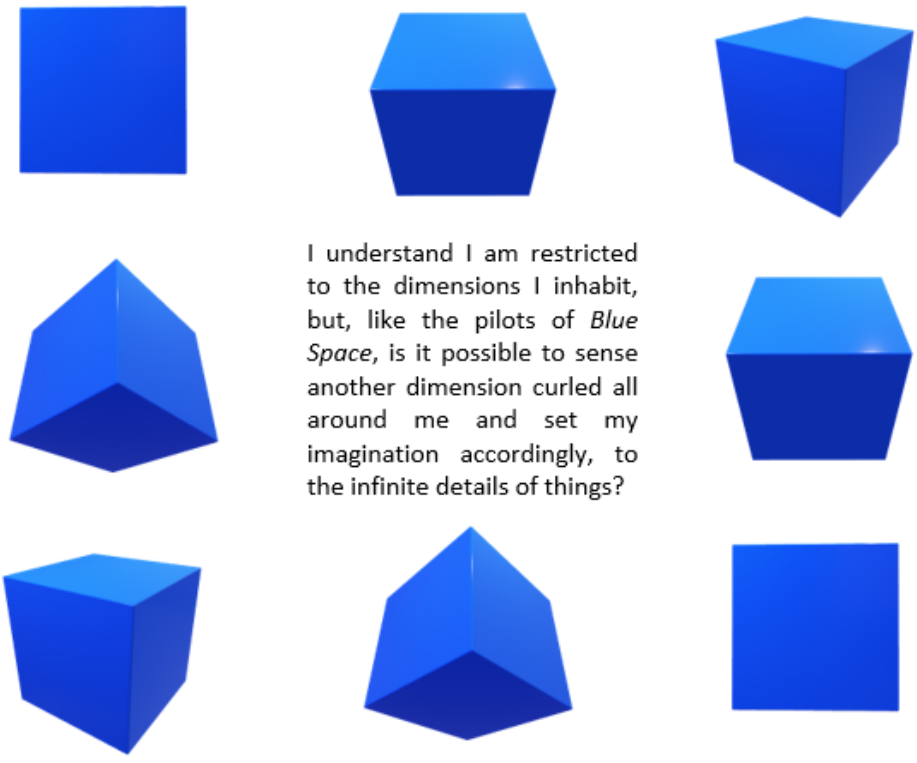
> …getting the profile of the cube "right" for particular class sessions or semester-long sequences or course sequences—that is, when considering CRP as a cube like that, I could change the orientation of the cube to create endless combinations of profiles (mixes of teaching explicitly, relying on other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

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

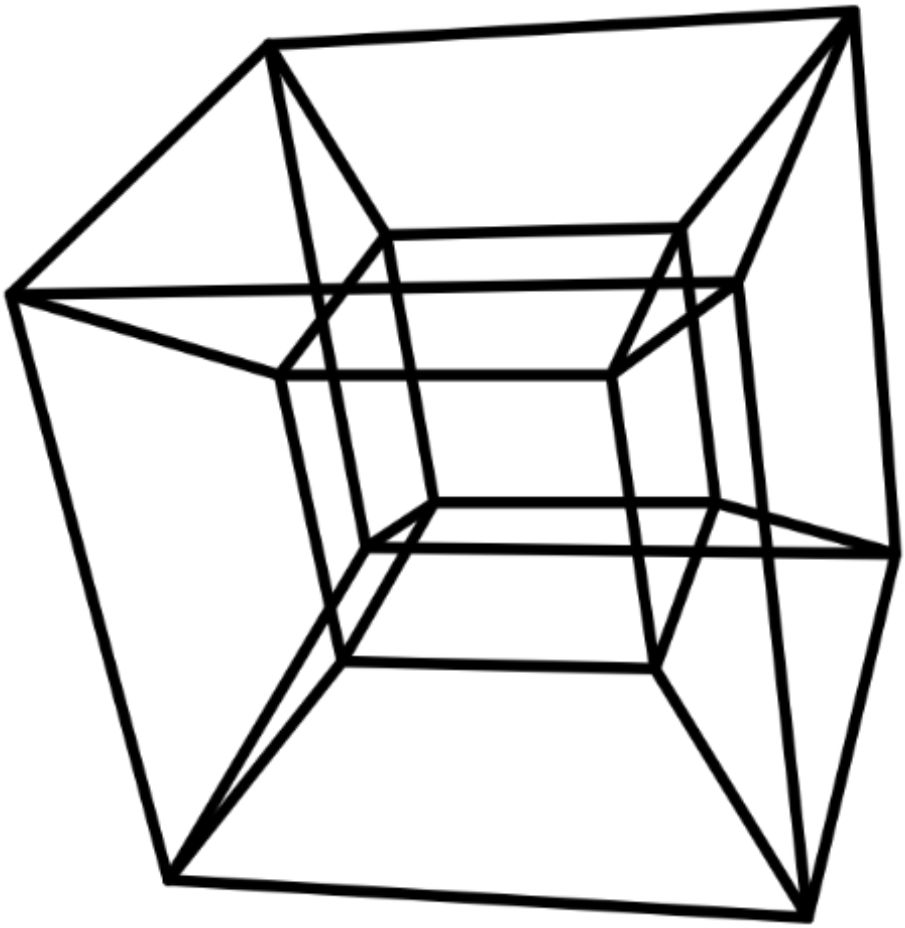
In their analysis of self-study research, Edge and Olan (2020) observe teacher educators in ELA tend to position their tensions as "texts" and call on disciplinary practices to make meaning of them, e.g., using literature to find insights. This rhizomatic self-study participates in that tradition by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

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

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



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



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

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