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It's Not Whatever: How Teacher Leaders and Novice Teachers Develop as "Politically Determined Pedagogues" within an Urban High School

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Publication Date
2015

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It’s NOT Whatever:
How teacher leaders and novice teachers develop as “Politically Determined Pedagogues” within an urban high school

By

Gerald Tiglao Reyes

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Jabari Mahiri, Chair
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Professor Malo A. Hutson
Professor K.Wayne Yang

Fall 2015
ABSTRACT

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“politically determined pedagogues” within an urban high school

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Implementing effective teacher development is one of the most critical aspects of school improvement. This study examines the cultural and structural nature and eventual outcomes of a politically relevant teacher development process in an urban high school that has a specific mission for its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective practitioners. This critical participant research examined how three teacher leaders and three novice teachers of color representing English, social studies, and Science departments were facilitated within the school to make sense of and develop as what came to be termed “Politically Determined Pedagogues.” Data utilized for this study included existing school documents from the site, participant meetings, participant narratives, observations of participants during school organized teacher collaborations, participant interviews, field notes, and memos. Data was analyzed by initially coding to develop specific categories and eventual themes to capture the nature of focal participant activities within and across several cycles of the teacher development process. The findings illuminate a dynamic and systemic process of teacher development as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners within the context of a School Cohesion Container as a framework. Within this framework, nurturing
teachers’ political perspectives as Politically Determined Pedagogues was operationalized in a way that could be adapted for teacher development in other urban schools as well as for teacher preparation programs.
DEDICATIONS

As I bring this Doctorate of Philosophy home, I share it with the folks who inspire me to reach my best self – my family and my community of trusted friends, colleagues, and students. In particular, I dedicate this to my beautiful wife, Bernadette Pilar Zermeño, children, Mayari Kalaya Zermeño-Reyes and Davao Paulo Zermeño-Reyes, and mother, Erlinda T. Reyes.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eight years ago, I began this journey to obtain my Ph.D. in Education. I had never thought about it before, but I was inspired with the possibility that I could be a certain kind of person with a doctorate. I could be in academia, helping to shape thinking and new teachers, but still be grounded and actively involved in the community and schools. I could model to my high school aged students that a kid from the hood who often did not like school could find the kind of revolutionary love that inspired a personal and collective commitment to contribute to the uplift of our people in ways that would require me to enter spaces, such as the academy, that I used to believe were filled with people who were unlike me.

Eight years later, I have a beautiful and strong wife, Bernadette Pilar, who has been the earth that has grounded me, kept me on solid ground, loved me no matter what, provided me with the kinds of support I needed to stand on my feet even when I felt that I could not stand anymore. Pilar, you also gave me our two amazing children who remind me each day that I continually struggle for them and the world in which they live and will inherit. Together, our revolutionary aesthetic will cultivate the type of warriors in our children that will continue making our world more beautiful and just.

Mayari Kalaya, my moon goddess and protector of women, my first born, my love girl, I could not have done this without your countless pictures, messages, hugs, kisses, and stolen moments of playing, painting, and reading.

Davao Paulo, my warrior intellectual, my inspiration of strength and resilience, my love boy, you have already endured so much in your short life, but yet have managed to give me so much more in this final year of my Ph.D. process than I could have imagined. You reminded me
of the strength of the breath, the power in the smile, that healing as a process is always happening, and that we are always becoming.

To my mother, Erlinda T. Reyes, and my in-laws, Francisco and Elisabeth Zermeño, your belief and pride in me has been humbling and inspiring. Your support for me when I spent sometimes up to 12 hours in the same chair in front of the computer writing never wavered.

Professor Jabari Mahiri, as an O.G. in academia, you have modeled for me both a process and a way of being and becoming in a profession that despite its desire to remain unchanged, must and will change. You have spent countless hours sitting next to me, talking with me on the phone, and sending me messages that pushed my thinking and taught me how to be a sound researcher in a world that will question my every move. I am inspired and in awe of your commitment to and belief in me.

To the other members of my committee, Professors Na’ilah Suad Nasir, Malo Hutson, and Wayne Yang, you have all modeled to me what the organic intellectual could look like and given me the kind of real talk needed to prepare me for the world in academia.

To all the folks involved in and have influenced this research, this is OUR work. This is for US and our aspirations to cultivate a community of transformative intellectuals who work in solidarity to provoke thought and inspire the kind of sustainable change needed to flip the script.

To Youth Roots, you were with me when I began this journey. Four albums, four talent showcases, and numerous presentations around the country, now look at you all! Whether in college, graduated, working in the community, raising a family, or even still searching for your way, you have been an inspiration to me and countless others. Never forget that.
To all the homies, Freddy, Gino, Cliff, who have consistently been my cheerleaders throughout this process, you kept me grounded, gave me perspective, and have been forgiving of my absences in your lives.

To my peoples at SCALE and Understanding Language, despite the rigors and demands of the work we do, you always remained attentive and supportive of my development as a scholar and finishing my program. You humanized my needs and me in a way that afforded me to do good work within my interests for our organization, while also providing the flexibility to concentrate on my Orals and Dissertation when it was necessary.

To my Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instructors, coaches, and teammates, you helped me to let it all out on the mats. You reminded me about the humbling, yet exhilarating process of being a learner. You taught me how to stay calm, manage panic, when and how to conserve energy, and to be fluid and responsive. You modeled for me that it’s not about the person I face in the fight, it’s about the determination I have when I face that person. You also kept my muscles loose during a time when they could have remained stiff from being stationary for hours at a time. But more importantly, you taught me that Jiu Jitsu is more than a martial art, it is a way to understand oneself and navigate through life. For that, I am forever indebted.

And of course to all my past students – from elementary, middle, high, or graduate school, you have impacted my life more than you know. You taught me about myself and pushed me to become more each day.
CHAPTER 1
In Process of Becoming

In *Letters to a young poet* (1993), Rilke noted that while we as humans are always *being* – existing in a current state – we are also in process of *becoming* – continually evolving our definition of ourselves. This insight is much like Freire’s (2004) critical challenge to change agents that “while being a historical being I live history as a time of possibility, not of predetermination” (pps. 58-59). These similar ideas remind us that we are always in a process of becoming more than what we are at any moment in time. Conditions of inequity can easily be seen as “whatever,” where we become apathetic or disengaged, believing that our situations are static or predetermined, where nothing can be done to change or improve things. Even within the literature of teacher preparation and development, dispositions -- those states of readiness, preparation, and tendencies -- are discussed as static and absolute. Either one has a particular disposition or one does not. Some teachers are how they are. In other words, it’s whatever.

On the contrary, it really is *not* whatever. Society, and more specifically teaching and being a teacher are always processes of becoming. Key questions should be what are all these things becoming and what ways can their *processes of becoming* be “dangerous” in the manner that Ladson-Billings (1999) argues. According to her, “dangerous work” challenges the myths of education by destabilizing teachers’ deficit thinking about diverse learners (1999). It additionally provokes self-examination of one’s ideological baggage (Espósito & Favela, 2003). Essentially, these scholars indicate that engaging in this dangerous work and interrogating one’s ideological baggage, particularly in regards to schooling, teaching, and learning, is core to a process of *becoming* what I have termed a “Politically Determined Pedagogue.” Such a
pedagogue is not only capable of doing this dangerous work, but is committed to self-actualization and self-determination for the long haul.

Living the Questions

That long haul is not an easy journey. It is riddled with robust structures that have reproduced inequities for generations. This constant reproduction can cause people to feel as if “it is what it is,” where the state of things merely need to be accepted and real change is not possible. However, those structures that reproduce inequities are still created by humans. Subsequently, any structures that humans create are also impermanent. They have the potential for change. This means that change is possible – difficult, even dangerous, but certainly possible. Anything or anyone that seeks to counter dominant power structures will be viewed as dangerous to those who benefit from those structures. As such, this dissertation seeks to illuminate human dispositions, perspectives, insights, and behaviors that are situated within institutional conditions that lead to a dangerous type of teacher development that counters the kind of education structurally built to reproduce inequities. Specifically, this research focused on the teacher development of three teacher leaders in charge of different subject matter departments and three first year teachers from each of the represented departments in a small Northern California high school that settled on native Ohlone land. I investigated this focus at this school that I have called Eastside High\(^1\) through the following research question and sub questions:

1. How does the culture and structure of a school committed to social justice work to achieve its mission of developing its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners?
   a. How does the school work to achieve its mission with teacher leaders?

\(^1\) Pseudonyms have been used to represent the site and the participants.
b. How does the school work to achieve its mission with new teachers?

These questions allowed me to explore “teacher development” at Eastside High in the holistic sense. Note that I avoid using the term “professional development” in the questions as well as in the rest of this dissertation. I do so to avoid suggesting that this research looked to find easy answers from a “program” that could be easily dropped into another context. This study takes the stance that “teacher development” can occur throughout each day given the proper conditions.

While the details of participant selection will be further explicated in the Methods section, it is of merit to be transparent about some particulars about these teachers at this point. First, three of the six teachers were teacher leaders who are department leads who were directly mentored by me. The other three were first year teachers who each worked within one of the departments represented by the teacher leaders in this study. Second, all these teachers, like the school, claimed a profound commitment to social justice. Third, these teachers have all come from historically underserved communities which was an intentional attempt to study a non-dominant population of teachers with the aim of understanding how to better recruit and support such teachers in the profession.

This research investigated how these participants developed as Politically Determined Pedagogues. Given my own relationship to the participants and the site, it was essential that I treat the process with care, sensitivity, and where this research could be mutually beneficial. To examine this process, I utilized methods of critical participant qualitative research (Lather, 1986), while being influenced and inspired by an Indigenous research methodology (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008), which prioritizes respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relational accountability for and amongst research participants and their community. While my research
also prioritized these 4Rs, I must make clear that I did not appropriate an actual *Indigenous research methodology*. In this dissertation, I intentionally used the term, “Indigenous research perspective” to refer to what motivated the way I engaged and interacted with my research context. I, of course, could not apply an Indigenous research methodology, because I did not build a study around Indigenous peoples. I will explicate in greater detail in Chapter 3 what I mean and do not mean by being *motivated* by an Indigenous research perspective.

**It’s Whatever: On Dangerous Ground in Dangerous Times**

Dewey (1897) asserts that *education* is a process of living in itself rather than as a preparation for future living. Others (Apple, 1990; Ayers, 2004; Darder, 1991; Giroux, 1988), further this idea by asserting that education is not the same as schooling, which moves young people into a social order to serve society. While education, in its broad sense, operates anywhere, anytime, and with anyone, schooling is a space that utilizes an authority figure to instruct (i.e. instructional process) a group of students in a social context (i.e. cultural process) within an institution that has particular aims. As such, schools are inherently ideological in that they act as both “mirror and window” to what society values as well as ignores (Ayers, 2004). Because of this relationship with society, we should critically ask the question, for what kind of life does *schooling* prepare?

Some say that teaching within a schooling context has the potential to justify and further the inequitable and hierarchical economic, social, and cultural attitudes of a society (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Ayers, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1997; Powell, 1999). For those who *suffer* from such inequities, this type of education through schooling is *dangerous*, because it is life threatening to the every day aspect of existence (Woodson, 1998; Baldwin, 1985). Simply put, their lives are at stake. Then there are those who are systemically
set up to sit at the upper echelons of the hierarchy and benefit from such schooling. Those positioned there will therefore protect at all costs such a structure and see any potential threats as dangerous (Baldwin, 1985; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999b; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Reyes, 2013).

In 1933, Woodson (1998) originally published The Miseducation of the Negro, in which he argued, “the thought of the inferiority of the negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies” (p. 2). In Woodson’s assertion, he implicates the institution of schooling and the structure of education in our society as positioning us all on what he calls, “dangerous ground” (p. 24), warning us of the effects of the enslaved mind, whether “highly educated” or not. In essence, Woodson suggests that we should be asking the questions, what are we being taught, not taught, and why? He asserts that a type of education that is controlled by people who have previously enslaved and segregated its students “miseducates” them in such a way that normalizes and reproduces the conditions and mentalities of inferiority.

Woodson does not stop at naming the problem. He also challenges that the education that is necessary for America is an emancipatory one that inspires people to “begin life as they find it and make it better.” (p. 29). Thirty years from Woodson’s work, Baldwin (1985) similarly calls for this emancipatory process in his work, “A talk to teachers.” He radically asserts that we are in “dangerous times” (p. 325), warning his audience of teachers of the risks of using education to counteract generations of systemic oppression in a society that does not fundamentally want to change. Because of these times, Baldwin challenges teachers to be “at war with society” (p. 331) by acting as change agents (or more appropriately, warriors).

Why invoke this older work from Woodson (1998) and Baldwin (1985)? Simply put, because they warned us. They highlighted a danger decades ago that still resonates today. Since
then, contemporary critical education scholars (Apple, 1990; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1988, 2001; Jackson, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1999b) have added that using the institution of education to be at war with society is a difficult endeavor. The inherent systemic oppression within education reproduces new generations of people to either suffer or benefit from inequity. This particularly happens to poor and working class communities of color where what they learn and how they learn it does not validate their language, culture, history, experiences, and interests. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008), argued that schools are designed with this process in mind. That is, schools are not failing as many say they are. Schools are actually doing what they are designed to do. They noted, “it makes sense that a school system designed to justify social and economic stratification would least serve the population with the greatest needs and the smallest amount of social, political, and economic capital to met those needs” (pps. 4-5). As an apparatus for transmitting such dominant ideologies (Althusser, 1970), schools utilize a hidden curriculum (Apple, 1994) to teach poor and working class students of color as well as their teachers that they are growing up within the same story (i.e. structure) of America as everyone else and therefore have equal opportunity to benefit in the same ways if only they assimilate and work hard.

To implement this hidden curriculum of subordination, one must control the mind and tools of developing identity (Constantino, 1982; Wa’ Thiong’o, 1986). To control the mind and tools of developing identity, control the educational process. To control the educational process, control the schools, what is taught, and who teaches it. This formula of colonization during the U.S. age of imperialism laid roots in the schooling of particularly urban youth of color. With such roots intertwined into a complex network, no doubt has teacher preparation and development been significantly affected. Hollywood would have us think that a certain kind of
teacher needs to be in our urban schools in order to control and then save these “dangerous minds.” Such beliefs sculpt the structure of how teachers are prepared and developed. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008) explained that these inequitable structures continue and are “tolerated because deep down our nation subscribes to the belief that someone has to fail in school” (p. 2).

Structures influence situations, which influence behaviors. Within schools, it is the teachers who, through the situations they are put in, fall into behaviors where they manifest inequity, simply because “it is what it is,” or as young people say these days, “it’s whatever.” Duncan-Andrade & Morrell even draw attention to how expectations of new teachers as being ineffective are “whatever.” They identify that whole volumes of literature already speak to the challenges of new teachers in areas that include a teacher’s social class and race, the lack of sufficient time to prepare these teachers, the power of their own socialization into classroom life, antagonistic and dysfunctional environments in schools where they work, and the limitations of scripted curricula. They continue by asserting that given such discourse, both an explanation and expectation that these teachers will not be effective in the classrooms begins to surface. Such a focus on the ineffectiveness to support new teachers limits the potential to influence them. So it becomes “whatever.” When these beliefs and behaviors become regular and normalized, they become part of the culture.

The worldviews behind the saying “it’s whatever” helps us understand that its usage is not only a response to a tension against a material or social condition, but to the larger phenomena of needing to be disengaged with a reality whereby one feels powerless. By evaluating the social context from where “it’s whatever” exists, we would find a belief that while a particular situation is undesired, there is not much that can be done. Therefore a powerlessness
(Young, 2006) and complacent attitude sets in. Consequently, the expression also acts as a safety mechanism that protects the speaker from feeling too powerless about what he thinks he cannot do, and therefore has no choice but to accept. The speaker must take a laissez-faire attitude in order to not feel completely hopeless. What is important to recognize here is that hopelessness and powerlessness creates a culture that leads towards slow as well as abrupt destruction (Freire, 2000; Young, 2006). It is therefore a moral imperative to confront “it’s whatever,” because lives are at stake.

It’s Not Whatever: Dangerous Teacher Development

“It’s whatever” is not historically predetermined. Yes, it represents a socially constructed phenomena that is a dangerous ingredient that places us on dangerous ground within our dangerous times. Yes, it contributes to the mindset and subsequent teaching that says that urban youth are dangerous minds that are in need of taming and civilizing, but Ladson-Billings’ (1999) offers up a dangerous counter measure. Ladson-Billings (1999) proclaims that destabilizing pre-service teachers’ thinking about teaching diverse learners, while challenging the myths of education, is “dangerous work” (p. 240). She affirms Baldwin’s stance that society, and in particular, schooling, does not fundamentally want to change its systems of inequity and inequality. To try acting against society’s rooted systems, particularly when those who benefit the most are groups in power, would be dangerous. She concludes that such work is necessary, while also difficult, if not near impossible. She highlights that dangerous work within education must both offer a critique of the relations of domination that contribute towards these systemic inequities as well as conduct an informed practice towards reform and change. As such, I argue that it is NOT whatever. Because there is a systemic and ideological nature to schooling design that reproduces relations of domination and subordination, “it” does not just arbitrarily happen.
“It” is a logical by-product of a system design. Even though educational inequities have been normalized, there is nothing normal about it. While schooling, as a national institution, has structural and systemic features that are built into its design and replication, these structures are not immovable. Inequitable student outcomes have never been predetermined. Teachers have never had to subscribe to cosigning inequity. It is not whatever, simply because structures are constructed. Something constructed, therefore can be torn down and rebuilt in another way. And doing so is of the utmost urgency, simply put, because our lives depend on it (Camangian, 2013). What then is the kind of dangerous work that can provoke a deeper examination and critique of the conditions and ideologies that lead to such inequities?

If structure is the problem, then change the structure. As structure changes, so does culture. Jackson (2011) identifies two types of structures that are important in creating an architecture of support to enculturate and align school staff to reverse underachievement particularly of marginalized urban youth of color: inspirational structures and literal structures. Inspirational structures are values-driven. They make transparent and explicit what is important and why. They illuminate purpose and evoke cohesion. Examples include a school’s vision, mission, guiding principles, core values, and theories of action. Literal structures are those processes and practices that equip teachers and students to effectively, efficiently, clearly, systematically, and consistently teach and learn at their best while in alignment and cohesion with the school’s inspirational structures.

This study is one that examined the structure and culture of a small urban school where part of its mission is for its teachers to engage in a continual process of becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective practitioners. Eastside High School, located on native Ohlone land in an urban Northern California city, envisions a space where agency and
self-determination drive their struggle to improve their own material and social conditions towards a more healthy, equitable, & just society. These inspirational structures are not like the dozens of stated visions and missions that stop short of self actualization and self determination by only striving to equip students to get into college, a career of choice, and ultimately to be productive and/or active citizens. The stance behind Eastside’s vision and mission attempts to change the discourse. It recognizes these dangerous times and yet, as difficult as it is, dangerously commits to counter them. Through examining Eastside’s attention to the interdependency of school culture and structure, we can begin to see how the school attempts to systematically and cohesively work to confront and combat it’s whatever and how they struggle in their process of demonstrating it’s NOT whatever.

To this point, I have framed the dangers of some problems associated with urban education while also moving towards needing to further understand a way to counter those problems through a dangerous kind of teaching. I have narrowed down that dangerous work by identifying that this research focuses on teacher development within one small urban school, Eastside High. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature associated with how teachers can develop, since there is already much literature that reviews what teachers need to develop. Following the literature review, I outlined my research methodology in Chapter 3 including what I mean and do not mean by Indigenous research perspective in detail. From there, I presented my analysis of the data in Chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 4 begins by laying out the foundation of the two analysis chapters that follow by examining the interconnectedness of what I term the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container. In Chapters 5 and 6, I analyzed how the data surfaced a way to operationalize and systematize how teachers’ political perspectives were cultivated towards what I term the Politically Determined Pedagogue. In the concluding Chapter 7, I
elevated the findings into five basic principles and then highlighted how those principles could potentially offer greater contributions to other urban schools and teacher development settings.
CHAPTER 2

This chapter focuses on reviewing literature aimed at formulating a “dangerous” type of teacher development within schools. For schooling to be truly transformative, it must eliminate its participation in the reproduction of unequal and inequitable social arrangements. Schooling must also eliminate its participation in the dominant discourse of how people talk about, think about, question, and plan the work of and within schools (Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1997). This endeavor manifests itself both culturally and structurally within a school, which acts in complex ways involving complex subsystems and subcultures. Within these subsystems and subcultures, there is an intricate mix of individual human and social factors that affect the actual situations and behaviors that occur and the meaning making that individuals attribute to such experiences (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

This literature review then examines discourses in three subsections that build upon each other: 1) Politically Relevant Pedagogy, 2) Politically Determined Pedagogy, and 2) the interdependency of school culture and structure. In the first subsection, discourses in Politically Relevant Pedagogy, which include conceptualizations of Critical Pedagogy, Humanizing Pedagogy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy offer insight into what a school such as Eastside High values. Moving from these discourses, this literature review then formulates a conceptual framework of how Eastside manifests their mission for teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective practitioners. Finally, this literature review discusses discourses in school structure and culture in order to assist in illuminating how and why Eastside places value on the interdependency between the two.

Politically Relevant Pedagogy
Over the past 40 years, there has been an evolution of pedagogies aimed at disrupting the reproduction of unequal and inequitable social arrangements. I categorize those pedagogies as “Politically Relevant Pedagogy.” In this subsection, I trace the trajectory of those that I have identified as being key to understanding this research, highlighting some of the similarities and differences that have led to the evolution of these critical discourses. I first begin with Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 2000) in order to lay the foundation of a critical base. From that well-known foundation, I move to Humanizing Pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994) in order to call to attention teacher preconditions as well as act as a bridge to the work around Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). As this subsection ends on discussing Politically Relevant Teaching (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 1999), it teases out the significance between the focus on “culture” versus the “political.”

Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy, beginning with the work of Paulo Freire (2000) is a language of hope, critique, struggle, and possibility. While his work is vast, Freire is often recognized for his work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000). Originally published in English in 1970, he put forward 4 key concepts that must be understood in order for people to understand, problematize, and work for improvement of their own material conditions.

His theorization of the banking model of education articulated that teachers “deposit” information into students’ heads as if the students are empty receptacles needing to be filled with knowledge. Freire argued that such a model leads towards dehumanization of students, which subordinates them in ways that limits their creative power and agency. This model of education is antithetical to the aims and methods of Critical Pedagogy, which presents as an alternative the problem-posing model of education. Through the problem-posing model, teachers act in
partnership with their students in a recursive and dialogic process to gain the critical literacy to name the world and make sense of one’s oppressive experiences in order to emerge in critical consciousness (i.e. “Conscientização”) and intervene in reality (as “the radical”) and change the world. In obtaining Conscientização, or critical consciousness, human beings have an internal sense of conviction for the necessity to struggle for freedom that is reached through critical reflection and action in one’s reality situated within history. Through the conditions created through the problem-posing model and the sense of purpose catalyzed through Conscientização, teachers and students engage in a dialogic process of praxis where theory, action, and reflection interact to (re)humanize themselves and transform the world.

In essence, the critical in Critical Pedagogy requires that teachers and students (1) gain critical literacy, (2) critically engage with and critique one’s world, (3) gain the necessary skills to act towards changing one’s toxic conditions, and (4) act to change those conditions. Giroux (2007) proclaimed,

Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central…make evident the multiplicity and complexity of history…enter into critical dialog… provide the conditions for students to be able to reflectively frame their own relationship to the ongoing project of an unfinished democracy (pps. 1-2).

In Giroux’s description, Critical Pedagogy is intended to provide opportunities for students to learn how to understand their own histories, conditions, and realities, while working to improve them for not only themselves, but for society as a whole. This results in students developing a radical view of knowledge, which is a necessary seed for cultivating reflexive resistance. This resistance that Giroux called for is aimed towards the control over the organization of school knowledge consumption and production.
Giroux (1988) also placed much attention on the identity, beliefs, dispositions, practices, of the Critical pedagogue, which he terms “teacher intellectual,” “transformative intellectual,” and “reflective practitioner.” He asserted that teacher intellectuals must apply a discourse of critique as well as a discourse of possibility in order to engage in the ideological and political task of understanding, examining, and disrupting the ways that schools and society in general reproduce structures of domination and subordination that affect the lives of students from various class, gender, and ethnic groups. He reminds us that “by viewing teachers as intellectuals, we can illuminate the important idea that all human activity involves some form of thinking” (p. 125). Such a perspective allows us to “dignify the human capacity for integrating thinking and practice, and in doing so highlight the core of what it means to view teachers as reflective practitioners” (p. 125). For the teacher, Giroux argued,

Rather than attempt to escape from their own ideologies and values, educators should confront them critically so as to understand how society has shaped them as individuals, what it is they believe, and how to structure more positively the effects they have upon students and others. (p. 9)

This process requires a deep introspection that examines the self. It requires vulnerability and openness on the part of the teacher that is rooted in the belief that this process must be done in order for the teacher to be at his best for his students. That introspection is informed by gaining critical knowledge. Such knowledge generates critical awareness of how a teacher’s social group is situated in a society plagued with relations of domination and subordination. “Critical knowledge would help illuminate how such groups could develop a language and a discourse released from their own partially distorted cultural inheritance.” (Giroux, 1988, p. 8). Essentially, Giroux challenged the Critical pedagogue to examine his privileges and intersecting oppressions
and how they came to be. Gaining the tools and knowledge to understand this inheritance then equips the Critical pedagogue to intellectually examine hegemonic discourses and proclaim it’s NOT whatever. This, in turn, creates an awareness of the self that evokes a more critical practice.

Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008), both of whom were classroom teachers, carried the work of Freire (2000) and Giroux (1988, 2007) into articulating some of those practices. They illuminated four outcomes from developing what they call “critical counter-cultural communities of practice”: 1) cultivating and sustaining community, 2) developing critical consciousness, 3) nurturing critical hope, and 4) fostering academic achievement. The vehicle by which Duncan-Andrade & Morrell asserted to develop critical counter-cultural communities of practice is through building a dynamic curriculum that is responsive to the needs of any community. Such a curriculum, they argued, draws upon the cycle of critical praxis, which involves: 1) identifying a problem, 2) researching the problem, 3) developing a collective plan of action to address the problem, 4) implementing the plan, 5) and evaluating the action, its efficacy, and re-examining the state of the problem. Through a curriculum centered around the critical praxis cycle, students not only start acting as collaborators with adults, but they also learn most of what is associated as “core academic skills that they need by engaging with their own social worlds” (p. 13).

**Humanizing Pedagogy**

The emergence of cultural difference approaches in the 1980’s to teaching students from culturally and linguistically subordinated populations sought to acknowledge the culture, language, literacy, and practices of student home communities. Many of these approaches, however, still demanded and therefore legitimated that there was a dominant way to be learned (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Such a perspective has led towards teachers, primarily from backgrounds identified as dominant groups (i.e. White), anxious to learn about the latest one-
size-fits-all teaching methods, strategies, or scripted curricula to deal with “those” students (i.e. culturally and linguistically subordinated students of color). To this effect, Bartolome (1994) asserted,

An uncritical focus on methods makes invisible the historical role that schools and their personnel have played (and continue to play), not only in discriminating against many culturally different groups, but also in denying their humanity. By robbing students of their culture, language, history, and values, schools often reduce these students to the status of subhumans who need to be rescued from their “savage” selves (p. 3).

To counter such a reductive and depoliticized view of teaching methods and deficit view of students who have been systemically discriminated and subordinated in schools, she argues for a Humanizing Pedagogy. Such a pedagogy calls for the development of 1) the politically clear teacher who uses 2) culturally responsive education and what she calls, 3) “strategic teaching” to help create the conditions and provide the access for these students to move to active positions of critical engagement. Bartolome pointed out that methods, lessons, and activities in themselves do not authentically prepare students for the injustices of the world, “it is the teacher’s politically clear educational philosophy that underlies the varied methods and lessons/activities she or he employs that make the difference” (p. 4). She named this philosophy as “political clarity,” which is originally derived from Paulo Freire’s Letter to North American teachers (1987). Essentially, Bartolome argued that teachers deepening their political clarity must first recognize that teaching is not a politically neutral undertaking and that schools are ideological institutions built upon a structural foundation that not only mirrors but also reproduces society’s dominant forms of knowledge, culture, values, and norms. Schools have also systematically pathologized, discriminated against, and subordinated students from non-dominant groups. Teachers who clearly and critically understand this tradition can therefore work with a commitment to transform this sociocultural reality at the classroom and school level. Teachers with political
clarity have a profound and personal sense of urgency, purpose, and responsibility for “breaking the cycle of subordination in which they believe schools participate” (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 1999). Their ethic of care and love demands in themselves and their students a discipline towards not only achieving academic greatness, but also in engaging in the psychological and political process necessary to navigate an oppressive society and seeing themselves as deserving of achieving excellence. Recognizing this interdependency is a critical component for not only survival but for “racial uplift” (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 1999, p. 3). Beaubeof-LaFontant (2002) highlighted the personal nature and commitment of political clarity when she professes that these teachers also have an ethic of risk, where they work with critical love towards a collective good where there are no guarantees for success. She added, “the hopefulness of the ethic of risk keeps people from falling into the numbness and self-absorption of despair” (p. 84).

Political clarity is both process and product. It is something that is confronted, nurtured, and deepened throughout the process of teaching towards the collective good. Teachers must become aware of and challenge their own biases so as to be able to believe that their students are capable learners. This process of political clarity gets understood at deeper levels as teachers experience the beauty and challenges of teaching youth marginalized by systems of inequity, as well as through the intellectual process of raising one’s critical consciousness.

In addition to Humanizing Pedagogy requiring that teachers are politically clear, Bartolome (1994) called for teachers to apply culturally responsive instruction and strategic teaching in order to help create the conditions and provide the access for these students to move to active positions of critical engagement. Culturally responsive instruction grew out of the work around cultural difference approaches from the 1980s and early 1990s. It essentially involved strategies to affirm students’ culture and language practices by incorporating them into
Bartolome realized the limitations of the literature around these approaches as “culture,” which gets reduced to ethnic culture and is devoid of “dynamic, ideological, and political dimensions” (p. 8). She highlights this distinction to make explicit to her audience that “without identifying the political dimensions of culture and subsequent unequal status attributed to members of different ethnic groups, the reader may conclude that teaching methods simply need to be ethnically congruent to be effective – without recognizing that not all ethnic and linguistic cultural groups are viewed and treated as equally legitimate in classrooms” (p. 8). From that standpoint, she posits that teachers identified in the research literature at the time may not have been successful merely because of the strategies. It was their political clarity that critically interrogated deficit views of subordinated students and humanized them, their sharing of power with their students in order to build relationships and interact in egalitarian and meaningful ways, as well as their recognition, value, and usage of students’ life experiences and previously acquired knowledge and skills.

Bartolome’s conception of strategic teaching illuminated the role of teachers as “cultural mentors,” (p. 10) who introduce students in an additive fashion to the culture of the classroom and school, as well as the particular subject matter disciplines and discourse styles. She explained that this instructional model explicitly teaches students learning and thinking strategies to empower students to monitor their own learning and become “insiders” to the subject matter discipline through a culturally based cognitive apprenticeship (Lee, 1995).

Ultimately, Bartolome’s focus is on provoking the question of the degree to which teachers hold the moral conviction to humanize the educational experience of students by consciously eliminating the hostility that confronts students representative of subordinated groups. She highlighted that teaching methods and strategies are tools towards achieving this
greater goal – to provide a humanizing education that empowers students historically underserved by schools towards academic success.

*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Some of the critiques that Critical Pedagogy generated have been on its perceived simplicity of depicting a binary relationship of oppressor versus oppressed and not drawing attention to issues of race and culture. Evolving from the work around Multicultural Education (Banks, 1992; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1992), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b) theorized Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which attempted to address the complexities of the classroom and teaching diverse students. From her study of eight successful teachers of African American students, she defined the term as a “pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (1995b, p. 160). She continued by asserting that this pedagogy rests on three propositions: 1) Students must experience academic success which stems from an unequivocal belief that all students can succeed, 2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence in ways where their cultural backgrounds and identities are affirmed and used as strengths rather than parts of themselves to be ashamed of and moved away from, and 3) students (as well as teachers themselves) must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order.

Because of the varied ways that teachers interpret Culturally Relevant Teaching, Ladson-Billings (1995a) offered three propositions for teachers to possess and develop. First, she asserted that teachers must develop their conceptions of self and others. This proposition refers to the way that teachers understand their situatedness and positionality in relation to their students, as well as understand their role in educating or pulling knowledge out of their students.
Teachers also see themselves as part of their students’ community in ways that value the assets and strengths of their community. In their conceptions of their others, teachers believe that their students all are capable of success, as well as come with a wide variety of schooling experiences, cultural experiences and practices, and funds of knowledge. Second, Ladson-Billings posited that teachers must develop their capacity to build social relations. She identified that Culturally Relevant pedagogues maintain fluid teacher-student relationships and demonstrate a connectedness with their students. These teachers also are competent at developing a community of learners who learn collaboratively and internalize a sense of responsibility for the success of one another. Third, Ladson-Billings argued that teachers must develop their conceptions of knowledge, particularly as it relates to their curriculum. Teachers must view knowledge critically and see it as shared, recycled, and constructed versus being static. Through this conception, teachers must also have the skill to scaffold and build bridges to facilitate the learning as well as assess for understanding in multifaceted ways. From these propositions of Culturally Relevant Teaching and teachers, Ladson-Billings (1994) operationalized these nine principles:

1. Communication of High Expectations: Teachers believe that all students can achieve and hold high expectations for all learners.

2. Active Teaching Methods: Teachers are learners themselves and vary instruction to engage, scaffold, and meet the needs of all students.

3. Teacher as Facilitator: Similar to Critical Pedagogy, teachers act as authorities, while also leveraging students as collaborators, rather than empty receptacles needed to be filled.
Inclusion of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Teachers know that students have a wealth of skills and knowledge and use these in teaching.

Cultural Sensitivity: Teachers, regardless of their own backgrounds, learn about the cultures and communities of their students.

Reshaping the Curriculum: Teachers examine their pedagogy and curriculum and adapt it to the needs and backgrounds of their students.

Student-Controlled Classroom Discourse: Students are given the opportunity to contribute to and control some portion of the lesson, providing teachers with insight into student understanding and language usage.

Small Group Instruction: Teachers accommodate a variety of learning modalities, differences, and comfort with speaking, with low pressure, structured engagement activities as appropriate.

Academically-Related Discourse: Teachers teach the skills, language, and create the structures and conditions by which students engage in academic discourse.

Politically Relevant Pedagogy

Much of the challenge with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been due to confusion over not only how to implement it into the classroom (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008), but also what it actually encompasses as a holistic framework (Young, 2010). On one level, it may be that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been reduced to an all-in-one series of methods and strategies that have been attempted by teachers lacking in sociocultural consciousness and a deep and holistic caring for students (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). On another level, part of the problem may have to do with its highlighting and framing of “culture.” Beaubeof-LaFontant (1999) argued, “culture as a reference for teaching can gloss over the complexity of class, gender,
and ethnic diversity that exists within any “cultural” group” (p. 8). This argument suggests that culture seems to have been essentialized into something simple, rigid, and fixed. Such essentialized notions do not account for the complexities of intersectionality (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 1999), cultural-historical repertoires of practice (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), multimodalities (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kress, 2000), and hybridity (Gee, 2004).

To adjust for these problems, Beaubeof-LaFontant (1999) presented the term “political relevance,” which maintains that there is a political history of systemic inequity, and “politically relevant teaching,” which expands the concept of culturally relevant teaching by asserting that teachers are “mindful not only of the cultural norms, values, and practices of their students, but more importantly of the political realities and aspirations of people of color. As a result, their pedagogy is “relevant” to the political experiences of inequity and disenfranchisement of their students” (p. 2). Because of their political clarity, Beaubeof-LaFontant highlights that these teachers view the classroom as a site of resistance against social injustice as well as a space for emancipatory practices that build critical consciousness about oppression while challenging negative self-perceptions. Lastly, she theorized that placing the gaze on the political rather than cultural experiences of students could potentially be a productive way to engage a majority White female teaching force into identifying and reflecting on their political convictions and pedagogy “as a manifestation of their stance towards the positive struggle for democracy” (p. 8).

Politically Determined Pedagogy

Eastside High is intent on its teachers becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective practitioners who aim for building agency and self-determination in a more healthy, equitable, and just society (Eastside Website, 2015). Much of the literature discussed to this point act as the key foundation to such a mission and vision. There is no single
body of literature, however, that is comprehensive enough to capture the totality of Eastside’s focus. For that reason, I argue that Eastside High appropriates a Politically Determined Pedagogy. To discuss this concept, which again includes and then builds from those discourse discussed prior to this point, I examine literature these categories: 1) Facing the self, 2) Love, care, hope, and healing, and 3) a Mediative learning community.

While Politically Relevant Teaching in name may move us from the problems associated with the implementation and interpretation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Paris (2012) challenged us to evaluate whether “relevance” goes far enough to ensure linguistic and cultural maintenance in our increasing multicultural and pluralistic society. He argued that “relevance and responsiveness do not guarantee in stance or meaning that one goal of an educational program is to maintain heritage ways and to value cultural and linguistic sharing across difference, to sustain and support bi- and multilingualism and bi- and multiculturalism” (p. 95). He therefore offered up the concept of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), which requires that our pedagogies support our students in perpetuating, fostering, and sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to more mainstream forms of cultural practices. Through his conception, Paris looked to build cultural connectedness and account for cultural fluidity and dexterity. Concomitantly, although he mentioned that CSP takes a critical stance toward and critical action against unequal power relations, his concern for multilingualism and multiculturalism placed the attention back on culture and language.

I aim to push this further by returning the gaze back to Beaubeof-LaFontant’s focus on the political as more of the overarching focus. If self-actualization and then subsequently self-determination are some of the larger societal goals for non dominant youth, then I argue that we
need to focus with this end in mind. Politically Determined Pedagogy acknowledges that relevance is not enough. At the same time, a Politically Determined Pedagogy is built upon those discourses reviewed to this point. It does not attempt to disagree with those discourses, but rather seeks to operationalize and systematize them further, while being focused downstream on our liberation, in addition to upstream areas of responsiveness and relevance.

As with Humanizing Pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994) and Politically Relevant Pedagogy (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 2002), the concept of political clarity is central. In Bartolome’s and Beaubeof-LaFontant’s conception of political clarity, there is an implication that either one has it or one does not. One is politically clear or not clear. What if one is not that clear yet? How does one get clear? How important is it to have background experiences in being part of a non-dominant marginalized group? Can one ever get clear enough to be politically clear? And does enough mean that the process then stops, because he is now politically clear? I argue that the journey towards political clarity is just that – a journey. Such a journey is one that is ongoing and deepens with precision through more experience, critical knowledge, critical dialog, and reflection. The notion of a political perspective is one that indicates and invites this type of journey. It allows for an individual to build upon and even scrutinize what she currently believes and understands. It suggests a developmental process – one that can be both exhilarating and painful -- that can be carefully guided towards an idealized notion of political clarity.

A Politically Determined Pedagogy requires that teachers are on a continually intellectual and reflective journey of evolving their political perspectives. It also requires that teachers learn what it means to engage in minute by minute practices that are humanizing. What can we learn from other discourses that can assist in operationalizing and systematizing these processes? Too often is the focus in the academy about critiquing with maybe offering up some conceptual
solutions that leave practitioners wondering, “what does that look like?” So we must also look to discourses that add more detail and nuances in order to present a holistic and practical solution.

*Facing the Self*

To humanize is not only an outward process. It is also an inward one that requires a confrontation of oneself. Haberman (2015) asserted, “when teachers face themselves they have taken the first step toward greater self-understanding and enhanced performance” (p. 2). Part of this process includes recognizing and accepting one’s mistakes. In large part because it is a painful process, the unwillingness of teachers to examine their own behaviors prevents them from admitting to their own inadequacies. Haberman continued by arguing that teachers who do not recognize or admit mistakes prevent themselves from understanding that they are not only causing most of their own problems but that they are escalating them into even more serious dilemmas. This analysis neglects the structure of schooling and how it can place teachers in less than optimal conditions where they cannot operate at their best; where making mistakes and having negative behavior is even predictable. Nonetheless, Haberman’s point is that defensive reactions and a culture of blame does not get to the root of problems. It places the gaze heavily on problem identification (likely with an insufficient analysis) rather than problem solving. It places the gaze heavily outward rather than inward.

Similar to, but not the same as Ladson-Billings’ (1995a) conception of knowledge of self and others, Haberman illuminated that effective teachers face themselves. He identified that such teachers engage in a continual process of problem solving, self-examining, and learning. These teachers know that mistakes are inevitable and willingly admit when they occur and even apologize. When anger is felt and/or shown, effective teachers who face themselves reflect on what made them angry and evaluate how to best deal with it. As difficult as it may be, they face
hard ideas about themselves and continuously self-examine their feelings and behaviors. They ask themselves why do I feel this way? Why did I react like that? These types of questions open up a deeper analysis that can be rooted in more critical discourses of schooling and non-dominant groups. To authentically engage in such a self-examination, teachers can increase their understanding and awareness of themselves, which in turn opens up possibilities to modify behavior.

As teachers face themselves and the institutions where they work, they start to disrupt previously held notions of schools, teaching, learning, teachers, and students. Espósito and Favela (2003) discussed these notions as “ideological baggage.” They highlighted, “teachers are a product of their own schooling processes, and carry deep within them schooling experiences that affect their classroom behavior” (p. 75). Regardless of their teacher preparation, teachers’ understandings of schools, teaching, learning, teachers, and students that are based on their experiences tend to fill in the gaps in their practice. They have unknowingly accepted such baggage as normal – as “whatever.” Teachers, particularly those who have had negative schooling experiences, have also been influenced by their ideological baggage in ways that evoked a deliberate resistance to replicating those practices. These teachers understand their baggage in a way that supports their journey towards ideological clarity (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000). Ideological clarity, similar to an ethic of care (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) and political clarity (Bartolomé, 1994; Beauboeuf-LaFontant 2002), is obtained when educators understand their personal beliefs, where those beliefs originated, and the effect those beliefs have on the students they teach.

This gaze on ideology and self-examination place much of the responsibility on teachers. What if a teacher is not placed under conditions where she must self-examine, particularly in
how she understands her beliefs and practices? More specifically, what happens when White teachers who teach students from non-dominant groups do not self-examine what they believe, where those beliefs come from, and how they manifest themselves in the classroom? Philip (2011) offered a way to assist teachers in working towards conceptual change in their ideologies as well as practices. Through what he termed “ideology in pieces,” teacher educators and those who influence teacher development can facilitate conceptual change by beginning with a teacher’s naturalized axioms. Those naturalized axioms are carriers of ideologies that reflect what a teacher believes, which in turn affects his practices. By examining those axioms along with engaging with discourses (i.e. knowledge building) that challenge structures of power in society, a teacher’s sensemaking can be facilitated towards being transformative.

McFalls’ and Cobb-Roberts’ (2001) recognition of cognitive dissonance theory pairs well with ideology in pieces. They explained, “according to cognitive dissonance theory, an individual can experience psychological tension or dissonance when new knowledge or information is incongruent with previously acquired knowledge” (p. 165). In the case of ideology in pieces, teachers will no doubt face a cognitive dissonance. McFalls and Cobb-Roberts, in their work with pre-service teachers, anticipated when these situations would happen and then made the cognitive dissonance transparent. That is, they made transparent to their student teachers what cognitive dissonance is and then framed ahead of time when new knowledge would be given that might create a psychological tension. They argued that alerting their student teachers ahead of time made them more prepared for their reactions and subsequently more capable of critically examining them. Such awareness reduces the potential of resistance to new knowledge from their student teachers.
If Politically Determined Pedagogy is to focus on dangerous work for the long haul, teachers must be capable of constantly working towards greater self-understanding. They must learn how to engage their beliefs and practices with critical knowledge and reflection in order to work towards the self-actualization of their students, but also of their own. When teachers face themselves, they also prime their capacity to deepen in their Revolutionary Love, Critical Care, Critical Hope, and Radical Healing.

*Love, Care, Hope, and Healing*

Politically Determined Pedagogy is driven by a vision for students to be self-actualized and self-determined in a more healthy, equitable, and just society. It is grounded by political perspectives with deep roots. Among those roots is revolutionary love (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), which is “the love that is strong enough to bring about radical change in individual students, classrooms, school systems, and the larger society that controls them” (p. 187). Radical change requires the type of dangerous work that is engaged in a lifelong commitment to struggle. Such a commitment is difficult to the point where it cannot be sustained if it is not rooted in something so profound that it makes the struggle worthwhile for the greater good. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell professed,

> Love is never easy, because great love also means great pain. It means carrying a burden. It means suffering empathically. It means recognizing and reacting to inequitable conditions that we have the power to change…To be a part of the difference in urban education means more than ingesting a great amount of theory and creating innovative pedagogical practices. Of course, someone who aspires to this revolutionary love will study and they will develop innovative practices. But they will also stop at nothing short of success, and this commitment will drive them to do things they did not think possible. (p. 188).

In this articulation, revolutionary love provides a profound purpose for teachers. It transcends above a preoccupation on technocratic procedures and strategies. It gives purpose to action and
drives action towards purpose. It invokes a drive that accepts no alternative other than the uplift of the community motivating the love. As such, revolutionary love is a visible action that has an aesthetic. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell illuminated that this revolutionary aesthetic is shown in the public lives that we live. The revolutionary aesthetic makes the love for students and a better world clearly apparent. It reveals to students and their families that the work of teachers who enact revolutionary love do so both inside the classroom and outside. It displays that Politically Determined Pedagogy must be alive and must transcend the classroom. Revolutionary love is more than just a feeling.

Hooks (2000) pointed out that love is most often defined as a noun – as a feeling. While love can be a noun, she argued that people would love better if the word itself were used more as a verb – both an intention and an action. Because of that intention, love is also a choice. As such, showing love places people in a position to assume accountability and responsibility. Hooks specified, “to truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients – care affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication” (p. 5). Through these elements, we can appropriate Hooks’ notions of love to teaching by simply defining love as the will to nurture the mental, physical, and spiritual growth of ourselves and others. Hooks believed that we must offer workable, useful definitions of what love is and is not. This allows for a context where love can be modeled, dialogued, practiced, and confirmed. This is a process of cultivating awareness. But what does this awareness lead towards? Freire (2000) might say that the practice of love leads toward becoming more fully human. Hooks (2000) articulated a similar idea when she explicated:

“There is an animating principle in the self – a life force (some of us call it soul) that when nurtured enhances our capacity to be more fully self-actualized and able to engage in communion with the world around us.” (p. 13).
Clearly, this process of self-actualization does not exist in isolation. It is a process that is in relation to others within a particular context. From this standpoint, Hooks then posited that justice is a precondition for love. Until basic human rights for children are respected and upheld, most children will not adequately know love. Whether in the private family dwelling or within a classroom, these spaces act as institutionalized spheres of power that are inherently ideological and therefore can transmit oppressive behaviors. Therefore, Hooks argued that for love to happen, people must let go of their obsessions with power and domination. Justice becomes a precondition for love, where power and domination are not central to relationships. There is no room for punishment in love as an action. There is no room for shame and abuse. For authentic learning to take place, an ethic of love must be central. This ethic of love forces us to live by a different set of values that allows us to give our very best to our relationships and embrace a vision where our lives and fate are intimately connected to others in ways where the culture of power, domination, and cultivation of fear cannot coexist, because they will inevitably limit our humanity.

Understanding revolutionary love and the importance of it is essential to understanding what drives the Politically Determined Pedagogue. Similarly, the concept of care is as essential as well. Noddings (1992) argued that education would be best organized as centers of care, which revolves around the human capacity to build relationships with self, others, life in general, the natural and human-made environment, and ideas. She highlighted that because curriculum is organized mostly around the same ideas for all students, the result has been inadequate teaching. If organization around ideas has proven inadequate, what then should be the priority within schools? As education cannot be separated by personal experience, Noddings asserted that if schools should have one priority, “it should be to promote the growth of students as healthy,
competent moral people.” (p. 10). Concomitantly, teachers and schools have the responsibility to help their students develop the capacity to care, which Noddings referred to as a “moral education”. Yet the structure of schooling (and teacher education for that matter) is such that students are valued for their academic achievement and even though teachers may care about their students, teachers are limited with making the connections and having the rich interactions that would develop caring relationships with them. Professional development in schools has not consistently and thoughtfully worked to align educators towards a moral priority. It is often reduced to a set of procedures. When the topic of care and building relationships does come up, professional development, under such a structure, has come up short. People and building relationships with them cannot be reduced to a set of methods. “Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors.” (p. 17).

So aside from highlighting what is not in schools, what then does care theory promote? Like Freire, Noddings focused on teachers and students learning to realize each other’s full humanity. An ethic of caring must have a contextualized needs and response-based ethic that is concerned about what happens to and within a relation. And it is unapologetic about making explicit how and why to care. Through moral education, this ethic of caring has four major components: 1) modeling, 2) dialogue, 3) practice, and 4) confirmation. With modeling, teachers show how to care by creating caring relations with their students. Dialogue is genuine and open ended. It searches for understanding, empathy, and appreciation. It allows learners to question why ad to arrive at well-informed decisions. Practice requires that teachers provide opportunities for students to gain not only skills, but also experiences in caring. These experiences must be planned as well as immediately responded to in context. Confirmation requires affirming the caring actions of others and thereby encouraging the best in them. To do
this, a relationship of trust must be built so that teachers can also know the other well enough to see what she is trying to become. Noddings called this last piece “continuity,” which says that the carer is present and is committed to knowing the cared-for and her motives and intentions well. Part of the significance of this last component is the simple fact that children will do things for people they like, trust, who matter to them, and to whom they matter (Noddings, 1992). Brown (2003) in his empirical research of teachers effective at culturally responsive classroom management extended this by elevating that “students’ needs for care must be met at school if teachers expect students to focus on academic tasks during the day” (p. 279). His findings illuminated that teachers believed that developing trusting and respectful relationships with their students was critical to their success as urban teachers.

Thompson (1998) argued from a black feminist’s perspective about the way race, class, and gender are examined in relation to systems of oppression towards a theory of care. According to Thompson, building a knowledge base for survival in a racist, classist, and sexist society is central to a theory of care. This knowledge base is akin to Freire’s (2000) concept of Conscientização and Ladson-Billings’ (1994) notions of critical consciousness. Through such consciousness, teachers and students confront systems of domination and oppression in a way that draws upon culturally significant understands of care to enable black students to not only cope and become resilient in a hostile and dangerous society, but to learn to maintain self worth and value (Thompson, 1998); they maintain their humanity. This creation and use of curriculum to cultivate critical consciousness is in itself an act of care that also builds trust with students. At the same time, Thompson urged educators to do more. She highlighted five dimensions of school practices for teachers.
First, Thompson insisted that teachers need to show their students respect by knowing about and then understanding their students’ situations. In an ethic of care, teachers accept the responsibility to give students guidance and support, which requires knowing the whole child. And knowing the whole child includes that teachers know their students’ situations.

Second, Thompson argued that teachers must help their students develop strategies to not only survive, but also to thrive. Included in this dimension is the learning that students must gain in order to politicize and be critical of codes of power. Learning to code switch to Standard English simply because it is a code of power is not enough. Teacher must help their students understand the socio-historical roots of why a code of power is what it is. Students must understand why it is NOT whatever.

Third, learning about oppressed peoples must occur through utilizing relevant sociological and/or philosophical frameworks developed within the paradigm of those peoples in order to critically interpret the experiences of those peoples. That is, a feminist lens should be utilized to understand women-identified experiences. A critical race theory framework should be utilized to understand the experiences of marginalized peoples of color. A colonization framework should be utilized to understand colonial mentalities developed within various 3rd world peoples.

Fourth, teachers and students need to become versed in a variety of cultural narratives. They must examine the significance of the different paradigms, genres, modes of discourse, and cultural contexts from where the narratives come. Understanding these cultural contexts and narratives allows for teachers and students to both grasp situations better and appropriately respond in ways that do not project our own interests or assumptions.
Fifth, teachers and students need to embrace a stance centered in genuine critical inquiry. This inquiry should be focused on taking a sincere interest in understanding rather than challenging and undermining. In the classroom, all participants must be able to learn and contribute to such inquiry and dialog in productive ways, particularly when they do not fully understand or appreciate the perspective under examination. Beginning with the process of understanding equips learners with the capability to do a more thorough job in the process of evaluating.

These five dimensions outlined by Thompson (1998) explicated a critical framework of care theory that forefronts it as an essential and urgent component of teaching. They depart from Noddings’ (1992) more white feminist perspective and raise the importance of confronting systems of domination and oppression through the critical praxis-oriented cycle (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000). From that standpoint, they are dangerous.

Like Hooks (2000) and Thompson (1998), Ware’s (2006), investigation of how two effective African American teachers complexified care theory in a way that not only highlights relevance, but also implores urgency. Ware (2006) departed from Kleinfeld’s (1975) study of effective teachers of Eskimo and Indian students. Kleinfeld highlighted two central characteristics that distinguish effective teachers from ineffective ones: 1) warmth and 2) demandingness. According to Kleinfeld, warmth is associated with the “teacher’s ability to create a climate of emotional warmth that dissipates students’ fears in the classroom and fulfills their expectations of highly personalized relationships.” (p. 318). Demandingness is not only associated with the teacher demanding a high quality of academic work, but also in her ability to express concern and care for her students not motivated by “passive sympathy,” but by critical urgency.
Ware (2006) added to the discourse of warmth, demandingness, care, and love by what she termed “Warm Demander Pedagogy.” In her study, she highlighted three components of teacher effectiveness: 1) having a deep ethic of caring, 2) having and setting high expectations from both their students and their families, and 3) mediating instructional practices that are culturally responsive. The significance of Ware’s findings is that she offered multiple concrete dispositions and behaviors that are unapologetic in supporting students (particularly African American students) into being and becoming their best selves, yet still rooted in a profound sense of care and love. She added to the conversation that a culture, practice, and development of care, high expectations, excellence, and cultural, ideological, and political clarity must be cultivated. To do so, teachers must be persistent, consistent, knowledgeable, “hungry”, innovative, and creative. They must become a cultural bridge and cultivate their “insiderness” within the community over time with the fundamental belief that the purpose of insiderness is to build positive and authentic trusting relationships. Additionally, Ware raised urgency and movement towards a better future when she challenged teachers to always be grounded in the challenges of their students in a way that leverages assets that will allow them to “lift as they climb” (p. 450).

These concepts of love and care are paramount in the cultivation of the Politically Determined Pedagogue’s political perspectives. Duncan-Andrade (2009) offered up another key way to understand the layers of developing one’s political perspectives in his conception of Critical Hope, which is an interdependent system of developing agency and purpose that demands a committed and active struggle. He identified this interdependent system as having three parts: Material hope, Socratic hope, and Audacious hope.

Material hope challenges teachers to address the material conditions of their students and providing material resources. Part of this requires that teachers be aware of the material
conditions of and their impact on students. One cannot address material conditions if one is not aware of them. Teachers can demonstrate their awareness of their students’ material conditions through their curriculum and pedagogy in addition to acting as an advocate and resource to their students outside as well as inside the classroom. This may involve teachers creating projects that equip students to critically examine their conditions and how they socio-historically came to existence. This may also mean that teachers are involved with the lives of their students and their students’ families outside of school. Material hope also means that teachers work to gather resources for their students. This may include teachers acting as a bridge to certain resources and services that are not easily accessible to certain communities.

Similar to Freire’s (2000) concept of critical reflection, Socratic hope is a process of examining one’s life, which can be painful, because it requires that both teachers and students investigating the situatedness and positionality of their lives within a structurally unjust society. The intent of Socratic hope is to lead to an indignation that drives action that works for change. For students, that indignation could lead towards pushing themselves to gain access towards higher institutions of learning that have historically marginalized poor people of color. For teachers, that indignation could lead towards never accepting illiteracy or student failure. For both, that indignation leads not to service, but to solidarity. According to Duncan-Andrade (2009), teachers and students working in solidarity mean that teachers earn “the right to demand levels of commitment that often defy even the students’ own notion of their capabilities” (p. 8). Teachers are invested in the liberation of their students for the long haul and therefore push their students while working alongside their students.

Audacious hope ties material hope and Socratic hope together. For one, when teachers stand in solidarity with students they share in the burden of the communal suffering and work
towards communal healing. Two, the pedagogy inherent with Critical Hope is such that it challenges the dominant ideologies that privilege some, while marginalizing others. Both these components lead towards indignation. But indignation by itself does not prompt action. Indignation must be connected with audacious hope so that teachers and students could act to make change. This, in turn, not only places both teachers and students on a path of developing the agency needed to make necessary change, it cultivates the conditions to a process and product called “radical healing” (Ginwright, 2010).

Ginwright illuminated, “this process contributes to individual well-being, community health, and broader social justice, whereby young people can act on the behalf of others with hope, joy, and a sense of possibility” (p. 8). Radical healing is active and cyclical process that helps both the individual and the community. In helping to heal the self, one can help to heal the community. Through helping to heal the community, one also works towards healing oneself. This process of healing also leads towards a sense of possibility is built upon a “radical imagination” (Kelly, 2002) that unlocks the revolutionary potential of hope. The oppressive conditions of our everyday lives are “whatever” for a reason – they are simply all around us and ever present. Such conditions can render imagination and hope inert. Daily survival and crisis management are front and center and make it difficult to see past the present.

Ginwright identified that, “healing involves reconciling the past to change the present while imagining a new future.” (p. 11). However, Radical Healing requires much more. It interweaves how hope, imagination, and care can transform the ways in which communities understand, problematize, and work to solve community problems. Ginright illuminated, “this process contributes to individual well-being, community health, and broader social justice, whereby young people can act on the behalf of others with hope, joy, and a sense of possibility”
Here we see that Radical Healing is both process and product. To lead towards such products, this process must include four areas: 1) cultivating caring relationships, 2) community and community spaces that foster imagination and hope, 3) developing critical consciousness, and 4) connection to a rich, vibrant, and healthy culture.

_A Mediative Learning Community_

Jackson (2011) offers a comprehensive framework that helps to concretize Politically Determined Pedagogy. Like the work of cultural modeling (Lee, 1995) and cultural historical activity theory (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), Jackson (2011) stressed the importance of cultural frames of reference, as well as directly on the learning process. Jackson utilized brain research to scientifically understand how new knowledge is internalized. She then built from such theories about the brain and how people learn in order to formulate a comprehensive approach to learning and schooling. In her approach, she infused elements of Critical Pedagogy, Humanizing Pedagogy, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and Politically Relevant Pedagogy into the practice of teaching.

In this comprehensive approach, Jackson articulated a way to understand how to mediate learning. She illuminated that understanding plus motivation, coupled with competence and confidence, mediates meaningful learning. Jackson explained that the brain achieves understanding and constructs meaning when it perceives, identifies, and makes connections to what it has experienced as being relevant and meaningful, which is contextualized by one’s cultural repertoires of practice. Motivation is context dependent and requires meaningful relationships, relevance, challenge, feedback, building and creating opportunities to develop positive self-perceptions, and guiding the development of personal goals. Motivation is catalyzed by engagement, resulting in focused attention, and stimulated by a sense of
competence and confidence. Confidence is knowing what is expected of oneself and believing that one has the skills or *competence* to meet those expectations.

To place this conception within classroom practices, Jackson identified that all students benefit from a focus on high intellectual performance (HIP), which is catalyzed by high operational practices (HOP). Such performance and practices get maximized through what she called meditative structures. Two key structures she forefronted are the Pedagogical Flow Map (PFM) and Mediative Learning Community (MLC). The PFM takes into account the way the brain needs to learn, or rather, the development of cognition that leads to high intellectual performance. The brain needs inputs to get primed. It needs to elaboration to process. It needs outputs through opportunities to retain for mastery. Jackson’s codification of the PFM is essentially a template of learning phases for designing an instructional unit. It entails 12 steps that begin with introducing or framing the unit of study and ending with a performance assessment.

Jackson argued that not just teachers, but also the cultural and structural fabric of a school must also have political clarity. A Mediative Learning Community (MLC) is part of both the cultural and fabric of a school. It is a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that is values directed. Values are centered around the unequivocal belief in the expansive intellectual capacity of all students, as well as the importance of creating emotionally and physically safe environments that support students’ cognitive and social development and sense of belongingness. For classroom learning, teachers use students’ frames of reference to reshape and extend their own thinking, while also reshaping and extending their practice. In an MLC, student strengths are targeted for cultivation and intellectual growth is optimized. This focus helps to build a shared culture of positive reciprocal relationships, where students are genuinely part of
the classroom community and contribute towards a space of “shared values, rituals, and practices that recognize, esteem, and nurture the capacity of the teachers and the students” (Jackson, 2011, p. 158). The authenticity and power in such a community of practice is in the way that it has institutionalized opportunities and procedures for engagement and practice. This cultural process of learning (Gee, 2004) that produces students to become insiders of a discipline allows students to develop and incorporate a meaningful identity into their existing repertoires.

Through these cultural processes of learning operating in Meditative Learning Communities that are facilitated by teachers acting as cultural mentors, who are politically clear in why they do what they do, how they do it, and to what ends – students can shine. These pedagogies draw out or educe the best in students, providing them the conditions to reach their highest potential. But how do we talk about conditions in a way that makes them concrete? Examining the interdependency of culture and structure is one such way.

Interdependency of School Culture and Structure

The microcosm of the classroom and macrocosm of the school function through designed structures that determine what formally happens, when it happens, and how it repeatedly happens, as well as through an actively produced culture which provides the patterns of values, beliefs, norms, traditions, ethos, expectations, and traditions that influence the recurrence of those structures. Any structure however is only as effective as the people’s capacity to operate within the structure. Hargreaves & Fink (2006) asserted that sustainable systems must be contextualized and personalized for people’s use and compatible with their human capacity. Systems must focus on cohesion rather than overly mechanistic, unwieldy, and unresponsive procedures. Such systems are bound to produce an unhealthy and toxic culture that is
uninspiring, demotivating, and can ultimately disenfranchise people. Systems that prioritize people, however, are supportive of people and value the work they need to do.

School reform often emphasizes and focuses on what happens within classrooms, whereas the school as an organization usually fades into the background (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). Bryk, et al. (2010) offered up a framework of essential supports for organizing a school and its day-to-day operations. They essentially presented a way to systematize and operationalize how to improve student learning through five organizational supports/subsystems: 1) Instructional guidance, 2) Professional capacity, 3) Student-centered learning climate, 4) Parent-Community school ties, and 5) School leadership as the driving subsystem for improvement. These subsystems offer a structural framework that also has cultural implications, such as norms for supporting students as well as norms for working together as professionals. Their grounded theory of school organization was anchored both in organizational theory, while also in a theory of practice which was intended to provide clinical guidance to practitioners. Their belief was that the framework should have practical utility, while also being backed by an evidence base that was empirically warranted for guiding school improvement. Newman, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk (2001) added that such a framework brings about program coherence, which is “a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period” (p. 297). Program coherence ensures that alignment occurs amongst all programmatic components in a way that builds toward a common goal.

Muhammad and Hollie (2012) highlighted that structures must be philosophically aligned in order to work cohesively. Structures that articulate a theory of action serve as a foundational
source of philosophy, knowledge, and assumptions for the practices within an organization in order to move towards some desired result (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). They are not to be confused with theories for action, or “technical instruments for change that ignored the necessity for a dialectical reflection on the everyday dynamics and problems of the oppressed within the context of radical social transformation” (Giroux, 1988, p. 118.). Theory does not dictate practice, but rather serves to mediate and be mediated by specific contexts and forms of experience from practice. A theory of action is aligned with such theories and is grounded in research and evidence-based practice. In a school setting, a theory of action connects a strategy to the actions and relationships that are deemed critical to effective teaching and learning.

Jackson (2011) added that structures must be values driven in a way that can align all staff around a uniform, integrated, and clearly articulated process for uncompromising excellence. This architecture of support structures, she explains, has two forms: 1) inspirational structures and 2) literal structures. The inspirational structures are those that make explicit and transparent what is important. These can be articulated as a vision, mission, values, and beliefs. They are intended to inspire the development of competence, the nurturing of confidence, and the courage and creativity necessary for the school staff to work in solidarity with subordinated youth of color to reverse underachievement. In this endeavor, inspirational structures must possess a political clarity that actively seeks to disrupt the systemic and reproductive nature of inequity. The literal structures create the systemic environment within the school community that sustainably mediates learning and progress. Through high operational practices, they facilitate the pedagogy in ways that are intended to create a consistently rich experience for students in their focus on high intellectual performance.
School culture is an essential complement to structure. Every school has a culture (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Through artifacts, symbols, and behaviors, school culture reflects what is of importance to the school (Hanson, 2001). As such, school culture cannot be taken for granted and left to chance (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) argued that “although a culture is a natural by-product of people working in close proximity, it can be a positive or negative influence on a school’s effectiveness” (p. 47). They stressed the role of the school leader in fostering school culture. In their study of school leaders, they identified the following commitments demonstrated: 1) building cohesion amongst all staff, 2) cultivating a sense of well-being amongst all staff, 3) making purpose explicit and transparent amongst all staff, and 4) developing a shared vision of the school could become. These actions require intentionality and courageous leadership that values a supportive environment and continuous improvement on the part of both teachers and students. Jackson (2011) explained that the cultivation of an environment where Mediative Learning Communities can flourish must have leaders who,

recognize that, like the students, their teachers have emotional needs that must be addressed in a safe, supportive environment where they can develop the competence and confidence to attend to the learning needs of their school-dependent students (p. 160).

School culture therefore must be intentionally cultivated, because a culture that positively influences teachers can positively influence students.

A healthy and positive culture is like the soil that nurtures the seeds of structure. It provides the conditions for effective teaching, learning, and student achievement. Healthy culture provides the right environment, and when functioning well, all educators in the school “consider themselves part of a team with a collective responsibility for students’ well-being and achievement” (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011, p. 6). A healthy school culture is
interdependent on supportive structures that assist both students and teachers to reach their highest potential. This process of individuals self-actualizing acts as a synergy towards a school becoming self-determined.

A Politically Determined Pedagogy is built from discourses in Politically Relevant Pedagogy. My organization of Politically Relevant Pedagogy includes theorizations of Critical Pedagogy, Humanizing Pedagogy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Politically Determined Pedagogy at Eastside High School is a framework to help the school’s mission for its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners. Such a framework exists at the intersection of the school’s culture and structure and must do so in order for the school to sustain its program coherence for the long haul.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design Overview

This research examined the ways in which three teacher leaders and three novice teachers at Eastside High School, a small charter school in an urban city in Northern California, developed in politically determined ways through the culture and structure of the school. This study was focused by the following research questions: How does the culture and structure of a school committed to social justice work to achieve its mission of developing its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners? How does the school work to achieve its mission with teacher leaders? How does the school work to achieve its mission with new teachers? To address these questions, the six focal participants participated in semi-structured interviews, were observed in a variety of settings where they interacted with other teachers, wrote self-reflections, attended participant meetings, and attended one-on-one “Check In” sessions with me throughout the course of an entire school year. Engaging in research also provided opportunities for professional development for the participants in politically determined ways to support their processes of becoming critical pedagogues, teacher leaders, and public intellectuals. Each of the novice teachers was part of a department led by one of the teacher leaders in the study. The departments represented were English/Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science.

In this chapter, I begin by delineating a theoretical framework to explain how this research engaged with the site as well as how I made sense of the experiences of the participants. I then briefly describe the context of the site and the participants. From there I detail the data collection, reduction, and analysis procedures. Finally, I make explicit this critical participant-researcher’s positionality, background context, and role within the process.
Theoretical Framework

Engaging with the Site

This work was grounded in a view of research that prioritized building and being accountable to an interdependent relationship (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Data was not treated as separate and disconnected units of analysis. They were analyzed from a cultural perspective that considered that meaning making is based on relationships within a context. Wilson (2008) illuminated, “we could not be without being in relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships” (p 76). This research examined the nuanced and provocative ways that the participants’ surroundings (i.e. school community) and inner selves intersected. Given my own relationship to the research participants and site, it was essential that I treat the process with care and sensitivity.

My consideration of the care and sensitivity needed in this research was motivated by what Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008) refer to as an “Indigenous research methodology” that prioritizes respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relational accountability for and amongst research participants and their community. While I did not employ an actual Indigenous research methodology, my conduct of research in the site did emphasize these and other considerations from this research perspective. For example, this research approach simultaneously acknowledges the way “research” has been inextricably linked to Western imperialism and colonialism (Smith, 1999), which has controlled the story of how “researched” peoples, particularly Indigenous peoples², have been portrayed and Otherized throughout history. As Smith (1999) explained,

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² In the broader sense, the socio-political intent behind the term Indigenous peoples uses a final “s” to invoke the collective voice of colonized people in the international arena (Smith, 1999).
The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful (p. 1).

As both a problematization of and commitment to research, this approach provides an analysis of colonialism while also contributing to the struggle for Indigenous peoples’ self-determination. In this regard, Kovach (2009) noted that researchers should show how their designs incorporate protocols on knowledge sharing, validation of local knowledge, and guidelines for “giving back” (pps. 142-146) reflected in four key ethical principles: 1) ownership – by the community of cultural knowledge and data collected, 2) control – by the community of the research process, frameworks, and methods of dissemination, 3) access – to retrieve and examine data, and 4) possession – the protection and physical ownership of the data by the community (Kovach, p. 145).

Although influenced by the Indigenous research “perspective,” I did not attempt to appropriate an actual Indigenous Research “Methodology” because my study is not built around Indigenous peoples nor am I indigenous to the native Ohlone land where the research is situated. Rather, I used these perspectives to guide me in not doing research for its own sake, but doing it in ways that were responsible and respectful to the political and social issues and authentic needs of my community, particularly in terms of how I portrayed the community and made sense of findings, being careful not to fetishize tropes of the urban while fore fronting narratives of pain (Tuck & Yang, 2014). The Indigenous research perspective validated that there was value to my insider relationship as a critical, reflexive practitioner, whose research would not only benefit me, but also the “researched.”

Smith (1999) offered several key questions to constantly ask throughout any research within a community: “Whose research is this? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve?
Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?” (p. 10). I added the following question of my own: What hope could be gained from this research? It is one thing for a community to receive an immediate benefit from research, but it is another for that community to be able to be on a path fueled by critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and the agency to propel itself for the long haul.

I did, however, design this work to be critical participatory qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This larger methodological umbrella was sufficient to provide the basic tools and processes to capture the nuances of the affordances and challenges from such a framework.

*Making Sense of Teacher Experiences*

Sociocultural learning theory, beginning with the work of Lave & Wenger (1991) but more deeply and comprehensively through the work of Jackson (2011) was used to assist with understanding how teachers were learning & developing within the site. In particular, the cultural process of learning and building an identity was examined through what Lave & Wenger (1991) calls a community of practice and what Jackson (2011) calls a meditative learning community. Jackson also offers up a way to understand the greater structures of the school through her conceptualization of meditative structures, which are both inspirational (i.e. values-driven) and literal (i.e. operationalized). Lastly, where appropriate, cultural historical activity theory (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) and ideology in pieces (Philip, 2011) was used to assist with understanding how teachers were making sense of their experiences within the cultural and structural context of the site. Through cultural historical activity theory, I was able to insert mediators such as reflective journals and one-on-one Check In sessions with me in order to engage participants and gather their responses in a variety of ways. Through ideology in pieces,
I was able to examine how teachers changed in their thinking and practice as a result of engaging in dialog and discourses that examined and/or challenged their thinking and practice.

Site of the Study

The site of this research settled upon indigenous Ohlone land in what is now considered an urban city of Northern California. A pseudonym is used to name this school in order to maintain confidentiality. Eastside High School is a small charter school that first opened its doors in 2007. It is located within a multi-use “transit village” that contains community-oriented agencies, businesses, residential housing, as well as a public transportation hub.

During the 2014-2015 school year, Eastside had 240 students enrolled, 13 full time teachers, 4 academic support staff, 4 operations staff, and 2 Co-Principals. The school began as a partnership with a local 4-year college, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and a locally based community organizing association with the focus of preparing students to be the first in their families to attend college.

Participants

This study works with six participants from Eastside High School who came to the school specifically to be part of an institution and colleagues with a like-minded philosophy. My interest in this particular group as focal participants in the study is to examine teachers who themselves came from historically underserved and marginalized communities and educational backgrounds and how they experience their process of becoming effective teachers to the students in this urban community. Additionally, each of these focal participants and I, have a common sense of connection to place (i.e. school & city). These factors are partly what bind all of us together.

The table 1 below provides a brief summary of the participants in this study.
Table 1. Summary of focal participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>ETHNIC BACKGROUND</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>SUBJECT/ROLE</th>
<th>YEAR AT EAST SIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Salvadoran</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>11th &amp; 12th English, Department Lead</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>9th English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>9th Ethnic Studies, Student Leadership, Department Lead</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>11th US History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janelle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American/Honduran</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Biology, 11/12th STEM elective, Department lead</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>American Jewish/African American</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Physics, 9th STEM elective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Karla, an 11th and 12th grade English teacher of Salvadoran descent, was in her fourth year at Eastside High in the 2014-2015 school year. She had the most credentialed experience (i.e. 8 years) of all the participants. She received her Masters in Education and teaching credential in English from one of the University of California preparation programs. A Bay Area native who graduated from a large comprehensive high school known for underachievement, Karla first taught and did youth social work in Southern California before moving back to Northern California to work with Eastside High. She started working as the department lead during the 2013-2014 school year and had also performed previous roles in instructional leadership as a coordinator of critical inquiry groups.

Tran, a Vietnamese woman, was in her first year at Eastside as an English teacher in the 2014-2015 school year. She received her Bachelor’s degree from one of the University of California campuses and in 2014, received her teaching credential from a non-university based credential program situated within the same city where Eastside settles. In addition to matriculating through the same public school system as Eastside after immigrating to the United
States when she was ten years old in 1999, Tran grew up a few blocks away from the school where her family still resides. Prior to receiving her credential, she had prior experiences as a non-credentialed professional in schooling and youth development settings. She first learned about Eastside High when she attended a workshop I facilitated during the annual Teachers 4 Social Justice conference.

Eric, a male of Filipino descent, was in his third year at Eastside High during the 2014-2015 school year as a 9th grade Ethnic Studies teacher, 9th-12th Student Leadership teacher, and Social Studies Department Lead. He matriculated through an urban public school system east of the San Francisco Bay Area. He received a Master of Arts in Teaching and Social Studies credential from an Urban Education teacher preparation program at a private university in the San Francisco Bay Area. Prior to teaching at Eastside, Eric had over four years of schooling and youth development experiences as an educator within a program that followed a Filipino Studies curriculum.

Heather, a woman of Korean descent, was in her first year of credentialed teaching at Eastside High during the 2014-2015 school year as a U.S. History teacher. She recently received her Masters in Education and Social Studies teaching credential in 2014 from a well-known east coast university. Heather matriculated through an urban public school system where she attended an exclusive high performing high school. Prior to leaving her home in the Bay Area to attend graduate school, she worked in a youth development program located close to Eastside. She first learned about Eastside High when she was invited to talk to students by a former teacher about her youth development work in the community.

Janelle, a mixed African American – Honduran woman who, like Tran, matriculated through the same public school system as Eastside High. She was in her second year as a
Science teacher at Eastside during the 2014-2015 school year where she taught Biology and a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) elective to 11th and 12th graders. She taught in other schools in the district for three years prior to arriving at Eastside and received much of her training and mentoring to become an educator from a district-run teacher incubation program that pipelined local people to teach within the district. Although Janelle was still in process of obtaining her credential through the same non-university preparation program where Tran received hers, she took on the Science Department Lead responsibilities because of her leadership capacity and potential. That is, as unreasonable as this may sound, she became a department lead despite not having a credential herself. In addition to this leadership responsibility, she continued to work within her district-run teacher incubation program as content area lead and mentor to newer participants.

Mark was in his first year as a Physics and STEM elective teacher during the 2014-2015 school year. He recently received his Masters in Education and teaching credential from a University of California program. Although phenotypically appearing as a White male, Mark is of mixed Jewish American - African American descent. He graduated from a Jewish-centered high school in an urban Bay Area city. Mark first learned about Eastside High while he was a student in a class I taught in his credential program.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for this research was collected throughout the 2014-2015 school year using existing school documents, one-on-one check in sessions between me and each of the participants, interviews with each participant, participant meetings with each other, participant narratives, observations of teacher collaborations focused on developing their teaching practices, field notes, and memos.
**Existing School Documents**

A variety of school documents were used to illuminate the research context, indicate teaching and learning processes, and measure various components of the school’s culture and structure. These documents include a myriad of publically available texts utilized by the school to provide clarity to why it does what it does, how it does it, and what it actually does. The use of these documents was particularly important in this study as concrete, public artifacts that provided evidence of goals and performances of the participating teachers. Examples of existing documentation used were the school’s website, current and original charter, videos made publicly available through the school’s website, the employee handbook (i.e. known as “Crew Handbook”), meeting agendas/action items, curricular scope and sequence, and public displays (e.g. classroom documentation boards, bulletin boards, presentations of student work) found within the school. Some existing documentation, such as the school’s website and “Crew Handbook,” include vast amounts of information. From these types of documentation, excerpts relevant to teacher development structure and culture were utilized as data. Examples of excerpts included the “Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect,” “Disciplines of the Crew,” “Professional Teaching and Learning Community,” and “Critical Articles that Form the Foundation of our Theory of Action.” Less public school documentation that were utilized included the school’s teacher satisfaction surveys, which were used to inform the school leaders of areas for adjustment and improvement. These surveys added a range of insights into how not only the six focal participants, but all teachers were experiencing key aspects of the school’s program.

*One-on-One Check In Sessions*
These sessions between each participant and me lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Reflective of an Indigenous research perspective, one-on-one Check In sessions occurred up to once a week and the content was driven by the immediate needs of each teacher. I would provide a basic agenda that followed recurring topics, but I would also ask the teacher what s/he wanted to include. This allowed me to provide consistent guidance to support each teacher’s development, even as I was a “researcher” interested in particular research questions. Sometimes sessions focused on a teacher discussing an issue of personal or interpersonal concern that was not related to her or his school leadership or instruction. At other times they focused on a teacher sharing updates of recent work, occurrences, and/or progress, or on a teacher wanting direct technical assistance on curriculum, instruction, assessment, how to facilitate a department meeting, how to have a difficult conversation or frame a message with another member of staff, or even what to do about a particular situation. The regularity of this structure allowed for closer relationships to be developed throughout the school year between each participant and me. Check-In session conversations were confidential. As such, my later discussion and analysis of the content of these sessions do not have any individual identifiers, including pseudonyms. Following each session, I wrote memos, which acted more as data analysis in that they allowed me to capture things I might want to follow up on later and/or to highlight possible tensions and contradictions.

Participant Interviews

I conducted two semi-structured 60-minute interviews with each focal participant, one at the beginning and one at the end of the 2014-15 school year. I used these two interviews to capture changes in the participants’ articulation of their political perspectives and overall experiences with the culture and structure of the school in terms of their processes of becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. Sometimes
an interview question referenced a prior interview, meeting, or common experience. At times, but not always, I would write an analytical memo after an interview. I used digital video to record the interviews, and all interviews were transcribed.

**Participant Meetings**

There were two types of participant meetings, those with department leads and those with the novice teachers. Department lead participant meetings acted as a Meditative Learning Community (Jackson, 2011), where professional development as well as the opportunity to contribute to analyzing the research was provided. Beginning the Spring semester, Department lead participant meetings occurred five times for approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours a session, depending on the availability of data to review. These meetings allowed the three department leads to be active participant researchers in this study, in part to develop their capacity as teacher researchers and to prepare for and co-present in various academic and practitioner conferences. Because of scheduling constraints and teacher capacity, novice teacher meetings occurred only once per semester for approximately 1 ½ hours and focused more on learning the theoretical framework used to make sense of the data, as well as to provide some feedback and insight to the themes found within the data. The structure of these meetings allowed for building community amongst each other, a common language and theory of action, peer coaching and support, review and analyses of data, and knowledge production. Consequently, these meetings had the potential to shape the school culture and structure, and they were in line the principles in the Indigenous research perspective: 1) ownership, 2) control, 3) access, and 4) possession (Kovach, 2009) used to guide the study.

**Participant Narratives**
Each participant produced written reflections on their teaching practices and school experiences throughout the school year. This allowed each person in the study, including myself, to narrate their thinking and experiences whenever they wanted without the pressure of an interview situation. These participant narratives were related to the research (e.g. after a participant meeting, after co-presenting at a conference. Of course, a delicate balance needed to be maintained in order for this research to maintain alignment with the Indigenous research perspective’s focus on relationality, respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. For instance, as “informants,” what was revealed to me in confidence was not for the sole purpose of this research.

_School-Organized Teacher Collaborations_

School-organized spaces included Department Meetings, Professional Development meetings, Critical Inquiry Group (CIG) meetings, and Instructional Leaders Circle meetings. Notification of my attendance to these spaces was given ahead of time. Field notes followed an observation scripting protocol to document what transpired during visits to these school-organized spaces. Following a visit, analytical memos were also written in order for me to make meaning from my observation by identifying any themes and trends as well as asking questions on things I might want to investigate or follow up on later and/or highlight possible tensions and contradictions. The use of these observational visits allowed me to compare each participant’s reflection of self and the school with his or her actual interactions with his or her colleagues. In some instances a visit was video recorded in order to support a one-on-one Check In session that focused on developing as a teacher leader. These videos were also transcribed for subsequent coding and analysis.

_Field Notes and Memos_
Field notes were taken during observations of the focal participants during school-organized teacher collaborations. An observation scripting method was used to capture what I was able to observe in the moment. Memos were written after raw data was collected in order to highlight anything what significant occurrences for further exploration.

Data was kept in a password-protected, encrypted laptop computer that was secured in a locked cabinet at the end of each day. All video recorded interviews and observations were transcribed onto a text document. These transcriptions, along with existing documents, participant narratives, and field notes (i.e. observation scripting as well as reflections made by the researcher) were also uploaded onto a secured server housed by the web-based data analysis software, Dedoose. After transcribed, beginning-of-the-school-year interviews were made accessible to teacher leaders on a Google Drive folder. The purpose of sharing these transcripts was threefold: 1) to be able to facilitate the teacher leaders to learn more about data reduction and analysis methods, 2) to facilitate teacher leaders to collaboratively practice conducting some data reduction and data analysis, and 3) to involve teacher leaders to prepare for and co-present mid-year academic presentations with me on preliminary findings from the research. To maximize efficiency and organization, participant narratives were produced on a single Google Doc like journal entries by each participant. For purposes of confidentiality, participant narratives were shared only with me and kept in a centralized Google Drive folder.

Data Analysis Procedures

Like most critical participant qualitative research (Lather, 1986), the data collection and analysis phases of this research followed a linear process with respect to four distinct phases of the process, while also needing to be fluid, recursive, and cyclical (Smagorinsky, 2008). That is, data collection and analysis sometimes overlapped and repeated in varying depths of detail at
different times of the school year. As a sometimes leader, sometimes coach, and sometimes advisor, there were certainly some affordances as well as challenges in organizing, structuring, maintaining, and facilitating teacher development while concurrently collecting and analyzing data as a participant researcher. Data analysis occurred over six phases.

*Phase I: First Semester Analysis*

Each semester in the school year contained two marking periods. During first two marking periods in this first semester, I began the process of examining existing school documents and writing analytic memos on one-on-one check in sessions and the beginning-of-the-year interviews of all six focal participants. I additionally reviewed the field notes I wrote during my observations of school-organized teacher collaborations in order to create analytic memos. Although the focal participants also started writing their narratives in their journals beginning in this phase, no analysis was performed yet.

*Phase II: Second Semester Third Marking Period Analysis*

During the third marking period of the year, otherwise known as the first marking period of the second semester, I began coding the beginning-of-the-school-year interviews of all six focal participants. I organized the interviews, which I transcribed, into separate tabs in a Google spreadsheet and did the first round of coding myself to create a rudimentary and quick way for the teacher leaders to contribute to the coding process during our participant meetings. During these meetings, the teacher leaders themselves engaged in preliminary reviews and analysis of the transcripts from the teacher interviews completed in Phase I. Together we came up with twenty-five total codes, four of which were parent codes, by this point in the research (See Appendix 1). After participant meetings, I wrote memos in order to both reflect upon the process as well as analyze what transpired.
Phase III: Second Semester Fourth Marking Period Analysis

Phase III continued data collection of existing school documents, one-on-one check in sessions between me and each of the participants, end-of-school-year interviews with each participant, participant meetings, participant narratives, observations of teacher collaborations focused on developing their teaching practices, field notes, and memos. This phase contained more depth in writing the memos than in Phase I and II, because there was greater potential to observe and identify changes and evolution in discourse, political perspectives, and conceptions of self, others, and school in comparison to data collected earlier in the school year.

Phase IV: Post School Year Analysis

Phase IV occurred after the 2014-2015 school year ended. This phase involved coding all data and analyzing for changes and evolution in discourse, political perspectives, and conceptions of self, others, and school. Participant interviews, participant reflections, field notes, and memos were used together to captured experiences and moments in time across the school year, change and to asses aspects of teacher change and evolution in line with the overall mission of the school.

This phase also involved the migration of all data into a web-based data repository and analysis software called Dedoose. Data collection was fully completed by this phase, and so a more intensive and complex process of data reduction and analysis occurred. During Phase II, there were only 25 codes identified. In Phase IV, there were 115 codes, seven of which were determined to be parent codes. This was due to having more data to analyze, having greater clarity in the research questions, and finding the need for more specificity in coding. For instance, the first semester code, “political clarity,” was revised into “political perspectives” as a parent code with seventeen sub codes (See Appendix 2) such as clarity of purpose, clarity of
practice, analysis of schooling, and socio-historical connection with students nested underneath. The notion of a code called “political perspectives,” which is more dynamic in nature, invited sub codes that were process oriented. As such, a more precise description of the components of “political clarity,” which in name implies more of a product orientation, was made possible.

As data coding occurred, but more significantly after coding was completed, themes and patterns were identified. Using the data analysis software, Dedoose, I was able to analyze data in two main ways: 1) Code Co-Occurrence qualitative charts, and 2) Code Application qualitative charts. To identify patterns, I utilized the Code Co-Occurrence chart to identify where instances from the data exemplified two or more codes. To view and manipulate the data easier, I exported the chart into an Excel spreadsheet. This allowed me to identify and quantify overlapping codes. From there, I sorted the codes from the greatest frequency of co-occurrence to the least. To examine specific instances from the data in relation to those identified themes, I utilized the Code Application charts. This allowed me to examine multiple instances related to each code as well as view each instance within the context of the original data source in order to further analyze the data. As I followed these procedures, I also frequently returned to the research questions to identify if and how emerging themes were illuminating them.

Researcher Context and Positionality

My positionality in this research process is extensively described because as Wilson noted, “we cannot remove ourselves from our world in order to examine it” (p 14). Additionally, understanding my personal context and relationship to this research further reveals my motivations to place care, attention, and urgency into this work. Ultimately, this study is not about only about demonstrating proficiency in doing research. In other words I am not doing this study as a “visitor” trying to learn about a “foreign” community knowing that I would be able to
leave this researched context and return to the academy that shields me from the day-to-day realities of the community being “researched.”

Throughout my life, but particularly as a professional and academic, I have sometimes felt like a border crosser (Anzaldúa, 1999) confused in identity and consciousness (Constatino, 1974) as I traverse spaces different worlds, but never feeling fully immersed in them (Spry, 2001). The work by scholars like Smith (1999) from the Maori and Wilson (2008) and Kovach (2009) from the Cree, in some ways validated my dissonance, but also provided me a clarity of purpose. Their work seeks to empower Indigenous researchers to straddle their Indigenous and academic worlds in ways that help them to help their own communities, while also addressing the issues that they face as border crossers within institutions that are dominantly occupied by non-Indigenous scholars. Their work reminded me that I often grapple with my own journey in the academy, both as a graduate student and as a professional (in Teacher Education, Teacher Development, and Educational Research departments) following its rules and how I interpret and experience what it wants me to be and become. What I know for certain is that my aim is to find ways to better understand and solve problems; to not simply know the world, but to change it (Fanon, 1970). When one commits to social change, one realizes that observation, awareness, and insight are not enough. One has a responsibility to act while strengthening relationships within the community.

As a participant researcher, I am grounded by my profound connection and relationship to the varied layers of my context and what they represent. The town. The neighborhood. Eastside High School. Urban Education. Working class, non-dominant, communities of color. I find this work to be more than research. I have a sense of urgency in this work, because I feel an obligation towards the well being of my community and those within it. By the use of the word
“my,” I do not mean that I possess the community, the students and school within it, and so forth. The use of “my” is a political choice informed by my critical socio-historic analysis of societal systems of oppression and social reproduction and my sense of ownership and commitment to dedicate my life towards interrupting and countering such structures and the harmful legacies left in its wake. By “community,” I not only refer to the school site and its participants, but also to the local neighborhood, the city where the school is located, and the greater community focused on urban schooling, urban teacher development, and urban teacher education. The last context on urban schooling, urban teacher development, and urban teacher education is mostly a symbolic relationship that is connected with my political perspective. This perspective includes a professed solidarity with urban youth and educators in the collective struggle for equitable education. Yet, while I am committed to doing transformative work in my local community and its teachers, students, and families, I am also dedicated to continually build with those outside this community to provoke critical and innovative thought, inspire change, and cultivate alliances and coalitions.

These perspectives are driven by personal experiences that connect to my positionality. I did not grow up the son of teachers, activists, politically active artists, or even college graduates, nor was my family and I part of any community that was surrounded by such people. I am a Filipino man, born on a U.S. Navy base in the Philippines. My journey into Conscientização (Freire, 2000) has been a painful, yet exhilarating one colored by the numerous experiences as a child as well as an adult. The early stages of my journey felt like an awakening – like I could finally see and hear. I awakened to an understanding that my experiences and feelings were not abnormal and strange, and although I felt isolated in certain thoughts and experiences, I was not. There are many others who had similar feelings and experiences, and that there were forces
connecting us. To have the language, socio-historic background, and the systemic understanding to make sense of, explain, and dialog about my experiences and feelings awakened me and evoked the kind of indignation that illuminated my purpose in life. If that process awakened me, inspired me, set me on a course, and brought me into a beloved community with others working towards liberation, why should that not happen for others? What if all oppressed peoples came into such critical consciousness and found a purpose in life to interrupt the cycles of oppression and improve the conditions of their communities and the lives of the people within them? What was my role and responsibility to catalyze any of that?

My situatedness and positionality as a participant researcher in this study is deeply layered and motivated by both my own personal story and the social-cultural-historic frameworks that help me make sense of and influence the continued development of my story. Those motivations can explain why I have done what I have done already for this community that I “study.” I believe to simply know what I have done is not enough. It was important for me to give some context into my motivations, because I argue that understanding those “whys” can provide a richer texture as to what I have done as it directly relates to this research and its context.

From 2010-2014, I worked as one of two Co-Principals at Eastside High School, as well a teacher and student advisor. My work as a Co-Principal fit into 3 basic categories: 1) Teaching & Learning, 2) Student Services and Accountability, and 3) Organizational Development. Given the school’s independent nature (i.e. not a “district school” and not part of a Charter Management Organization) the Co-Principal job was and continues to be vast. Much of my work during this time was not only on maintaining day-to-day operations, but also in developing the systems, structures, practices and culture needed to sustain the school into the future.
It is also important to note the non-Principal roles I have held within the school. In the 2010-2011 and the 2013-2014 school years, I worked as a classroom teacher within the Humanities department. In the 2010-2011 school year, I taught one cohort of 9th grade Humanities, teaching Social Studies and English in a block schedule (i.e. 2 hour class combining both subjects). In the 2013-2014 school year, I taught one section of 12th grade English, which also provided San Francisco State University college credit to each student through the Step to College program. Many of those students whom I taught in 2010-2011 as 9th graders became the 12th graders in that 2013-2014 class. Because students at Eastside High get to have some degree of choice in what classes they take and with which teacher beginning their 11th grade year, many of those students in my 12th grade English class chose to be in there with me.

Being a high school principal is hard enough, but I decided to teach courses 1) to lead the development of a codified sequence of English learning targets and anchor performance assessments for grades nine through twelve, especially to figure out our vision for what the graduating twelve grade student should be able to know and do, and 2) to codify a systematic literacy development approach that could be implemented school wide. I wanted to develop a year long consciousness raising and common core aligned curriculum that followed the critical praxis cycle into a culminating year end Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project. My decision to go back into the classroom in conjunction with that of the co-Principal simply put was to figure out what was needed in curriculum and instruction in order for the school to survive. My point in describing my various roles in the school is to highlight that my positionality is reflected in concrete experiences in the classroom where my work acted as a model to other teachers and to illustrate the my commitment and engagement to all the stakeholders in the school.
During the 2014-2015 school year when this research was being conducted, I was no longer a Co-Principal. However, I volunteered (i.e. unpaid and not an official employee) as the co-lead and instructional coach for the English department (of 3 people) as well as mentored three teacher-leaders, one of whom was my co-lead. Four of the six participants in this research had a direct mentoring relationship with me. The other two received direct coaching and guidance from their department leads, who again, were being supported directly by me. The tree diagram below illustrates this relationship.

*Figure 1. The researcher’s connection to focal participants.*
CHAPTER 4
Eastside High School

The intersection of culture and structure within a school can work cohesively to help realize its vision, mission, and values. Eastside High attempted to achieve its mission of developing its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners through such an intersection. This chapter followed data analysis procedures from Phases I and II. Data sources included the school’s existing documentation and beginning-of-the-school year interviews from the six focal participants. Existing documentation utilized were the school’s website, current and original charter, videos made publicly available through the school’s website, curricular scope and sequence, and the employee handbook which included several sub-sections noted in the methods chapter. Other documentation utilized included the school’s teacher satisfaction surveys. These data were used to analyze how Eastside’s cultural and structural conditions intersected in its attempts to realize its vision, mission, and values. I also brought in initial voices of my focal participants in response or to expand upon these school documents in conjunction with my own voice as a participant researcher in tracing how and why the school evolved to its present state.

Documenting Today

A promotional video on Eastside’s home page (Website, 2014) was labeled “Hear the Voices of Eastside.” Upon playing it for only 20 seconds, a quick glimpse of the colorful, print rich, environment with engaged students of color was depicted. The voice of a female, high school junior began the narration, “they teach us about our community and us, and how our voice actually matters, and how young people are actually capable of making a change.” Whether
through other videos, text, or use of imagery, Eastside made an intention to reveal their political beliefs in a humanizing as well as inspirational way.

The school’s vision, mission, and core values were meant to guide and also to inspire this educational community. At the same time, these types of inspirational structures found within Eastside’s documentation articulated a bold, political stance (Website, 2014),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vision:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>At Eastside we nurture, train, and discipline our school community to engage in a continuous practice of developing mind, heart, and body towards a vision where we actively rise up. Agency and self-determination drive our struggle to improve our own material and social conditions towards a more healthy, equitable, &amp; just society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mission:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The mission of Eastside High School is to empower ourselves with the skills, knowledge, and agency to become highly educated, humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective leaders in our community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Core Values:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RESPECT: Respect Self, Others, Your Words, &amp; Our Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PERSEVERE: Persevere through uncertainty, challenge, &amp; struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>BUILD: Build discipline, knowledge, self-esteem, agency, &amp; community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>LEAD: Lead with integrity, courage, and through action (Website, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rather than using more general language, these documents utilized particular language to reveal what Eastside valued and believed as a school. There were clear signs of Eastside’s intent to develop its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious intellectually engaged and reflective practitioners. In its vision, for instance, Eastside used language that suggested their ethic of care, which was an indication of the conditions that the school sought to cultivate for its teachers. For instance, the usage of the word “nurture” in reference towards “our school community” (line 2) engaging in a “continuous practice” (line 3) suggested that Eastside valued a process that required careful attention, nourishment, sensitivity, and commitment in order to
support growth over the long haul in a humanizing way. Concomitantly, Eastside also used the words “train” and “discipline” (line 2) towards actively rising up within the same sentence that asserted the nurturing of their community. This revealed their ethic of care in a way where the “nurturing” was done with a certain urgent purpose – to “actively rise up.”

In lines 4-6, the “rising up” was given context. With words such as “agency,” “self-determination,” and “struggle” (lines 4-5), Eastside indicated their need to have critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. They revealed their revolutionary love and commitment towards improving their conditions and society as a whole in order to achieve self-actualization and self-determination. They also emphasized their ethic of care and revolutionary love with their frequent usage of the word, “our.” This word choice made Eastside’s vision sound more personal and maternal in nature – that is, more humanizing. It revealed a belief of being in solidarity with their school community (e.g. school staff, students, and families) versus only being in service to a community. The use of “our” stresses inclusiveness and does not create a divide.

Eastside’s vision also demonstrated cohesion with its mission and core values. For instance, the following words from the mission and core values were also found in the vision: our, community, agency, struggle, discipline, and action. This alignment helped to elaborate a cohesive process of manifesting the vision. In Eastside’s mission, they highlighted a process of empowerment of acquiring certain things – skills, knowledge, agency -- in order to become something specific -- highly educated, humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, and reflective leaders.

The development of such an identity appeared to be directed through their core values, which was articulated as verbs rather than nouns. As verbs, their values took on a concrete
action orientation -- respect, persevere, build, and lead. As verbs, they took on a dynamic 
process of what to do and what to continuously develop rather than what the use of nouns might 
have implied -- a static possession. Additionally, those values were not simply named without 
context. Meaning making was not left entirely to the audience. Eastside provided explication of 
what they meant by those verbs. Providing such explication did not suggest that Eastside did not 
still have to teach and build a shared understanding of what those values meant in daily practice, 
but rather ensured some level of direction while also being in political congruence with the 
vision and mission. The interpretation of Eastside’s core values was not left to chance. The 
explication of the values attempted to avoid a neutral interpretation and indicated a political 
stance that cohesively aligned with the vision and mission. For instance the value of “build” was 
explicated as such, “Build discipline, knowledge, self-esteem, agency, & community.” Each of 
these words is consistent with language used in both the vision and mission. As a cohesive 
idea, the value of “build” suggests a process that leads towards self-actualization and self-
determination. There is a purpose for “building.” There is a goal to be achieved.

Karla is an 11th and 12th grade English teacher and the Teacher Lead for her department. 
She was at Eastside the longest out of all the focal participants in this research. When asked 
during her beginning-of-the-year interview about why she stays at Eastside, she not only 
reference the school’s vision, mission, and core values, but she narrated how those manifested 
into her work, 

I stay here because I believe in the vision, the mission, and the core values that have been 
created. I stay here because I've grown a lot as an educator here. I truly believe that I'm a 
much better teacher now having been at Eastside, not just because of the years of 
experience, but also because of targeted support and the opportunities to grow as a 
teacher intellectual. Because people forget that’s what we are, right? We’re intellectuals 
because we’re still learning and refining our purpose and really looking at what does it 
mean to be a teacher of whatever your content area is. For me in English, what does it 
mean to be a teacher in English Language Arts? It's exciting to be able to look at it from a
perspective and from a philosophy that not only do I agree with but also aligns with the reason why I teach in the first place. Being able to not have to justify bringing in the sociological lenses but also making sure to teach the skills. That is the real reason why I stay here, because I feel that I can grow as a teacher. I can see the growth in my students’ skills, academically and socio-emotionally. And it makes me feel like I'm doing good work. Whereas in other places, it's hard to see. You often feel like you're just grinding, grinding, grinding and it's difficult to see if you're making any kind of impact, or any headway in anything, and that's demoralizing because when you just work so hard and you're not able to see the fruits of your labor, it's you know, it's that delayed gratification IF you ever get it. Whereas here at Eastside I think yes, it's absolutely hard work. I think I work harder here and I definitely work longer hours here than I have at any other school, but I can see, everyday, my students’ growth, my own growth, and I get support. (10/2/14).

Karla elaborated upon how the vision, mission, and core values were more than merely words on paper to her. They were tangible, real, and lived each day. She highlighted how being intellectually engaged was more than mere mental stimulation. It was connected to growth in refining purpose as a content area expert. Karla discussed how her journey as a reflective practitioner was filled with not just growth, but also opportunities to grow. This reflection revealed that the school structurally catalyzed her growth. Karla noted on her development as a critically conscious educator with her not having to “justify” bringing in sociological lenses to teach English/Language Arts skills, because the school’s philosophy aligned with her purpose for teaching. In a number of ways, Karla also layered how she was being humanized and becoming a more humanizing teacher. She commented how being able to monitor and measure students’ academic and socio-emotional growth was affirming of her hard work. Such awareness and intentionality in both these types of growth likely required a humanizing pedagogy. Working hard at Eastside was not “demoralizing” like in “other places” where it may not have been clear how she was growing nor how her students were growing. Her comments about own growth also suggested that the school valued her progress rather than merely seeing her as a worker.
Eastside’s vision, mission, and core values were also in cohesion and alignment with its other inspirational structures that articulated what they valued, the work they did, and how they did it. For instance, the documents provided additional articulation of the core value of “respect” through what they called the “Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect” (Website, 2015). Again, it appeared that Eastside did not want to leave interpretation to chance and wanted to explicate “respect” even further. “The Codes” detailed what Eastside meant at a political, philosophical, and everyday level, especially since “respect” is often named as a value in schools and classrooms, but rarely is explicitly described. The following is the full description of Eastside’s Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warrior Intellectuals follow strict codes to help her or his self to live life with integrity and love. A warrior intellectual disciplines her or his self with the strength, courage, and conviction to hold true these foundational Eastside Codes of Respect in order to help her or his self and the Eastside community rise up:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RESPECT SELF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Love myself. Know myself. Study myself, the word, &amp; the world. To study is my revolutionary duty, so I work on myself, so I can also work on the world. I deserve to be the best me I can be within the best world I can help make.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>RESPECT YOUR WORDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Choose your words with precision. Your words have the power to move people in a positive direction, so choose the right words to mean exactly what you want to say. Your words can also hurt, even when you don’t mean it. Because our community is sacred, hurtful and hateful language is not acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RESPECT OTHERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Know others. Listen to others. Understand others. Transform ME into WE. It’s hard enough to survive by ourselves. We can’t do it alone. We need to help each other to be the best WE we can be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>RESPECT SPACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>This is our space. It is a sacred space of love, learning, inspiration, &amp; community. Space is about the energy we bring into it just as much as its physical beauty &amp; cleanliness. The energy each of us brings into classroom &amp; school spaces help maintain our Core Values. Making &amp; keeping our space positive, clean, &amp; beautiful is easy when we pay attention &amp; know that our help matters. We deserve the best (Website, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The structure of how the Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect was written appears intentional and significant. Lines 1-4 framed the identity of the “Warrior Intellectual,” what she does, and towards what aims she does those things. Framing this identity helped to make the description of the codes that followed more relevant, urgent, and significant as attempts at uplifting the community. The descriptions of the codes themselves followed somewhat of a parallel structure that began with some basic actions (i.e. lines 7, 12, 18, and 23). They proceeded to root those actions in an explicit meaning (e.g. lines 7-8). Then, they culminated into establishing a greater significance (e.g. lines 8-9).

As an inspirational structure, the Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect provided a glimpse of the culture of empowerment that Eastside seemed to cultivate. First, Eastside provided a significant amount of time to explicating the meaning of “respect.” The way it disentangled what respect meant, revealed how it attempted to provide a common language and culture of how and where to practice this value: the self, others, words, and space. Second, there was a political stance embedded within the entire narrative. “Warrior Intellectual” is not commonly heard language and is certainly not usually framed alongside the concept of respect. For instance, the elaboration on “Respect Self,” indicated that not only are individuals important, but they are significant while part of a bigger context and struggle. Third, these codes were present throughout the school on the walls and in other documentation that both students and teachers used. Making such a framework visible and alive had the potential to enter the daily culture of the school. For instance, rooting a conversation about behavior in values rather than mere rules could simultaneously allow teachers to mentor and guide a student, while resetting behavioral expectations. A conversation such as this would help to establish value in and of the
space of the school. The Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect had the potential to align teachers with a common purpose and expectation into how conflicts with students were viewed and mediated. In her beginning-of-the-school year interview, for example, Janelle, the Science Department Lead, elaborated upon this idea,

I like that the teachers here are the same way. Everyone's here for the same reason in terms of like we know that there is a war going on. And not a war like with guns and violence. I'm going beyond that. We're talking about knowledge and self and where we are going as people of color and people are trying to act like they don't see and not getting our students prepared. And this whole "Warrior Intellectual" standpoint is something I like. When I got here, it grounded me. It gave me the words and terminology and theory behind what I had naturally of giving students academics and an education to defend themselves in this world. So they could go out and be successful and know how to fight the mental battle. Here, we know about the physical battle because it's all around us, but our kids don't get the mental battle, like how do you articulate and express yourself to get around obstacles? And I feel like we do that here, and I know if I teach something in my classroom, that it's gonna be heard at least 3 other times by 3 other teachers in the same space, sometimes within the same day. (10/15/14)

In this passage, Janelle identified with the concept of the “Warrior Intellectual” as she articulated her own clarity of purpose as a teacher. The identity of the Warrior Intellectual seemed to root her in a tradition that was about a collective struggle for justice, particularly in a difficult and challenging world. It provided her with a framework and language to guide how she worked with her students, while also creating alliances, cohesion, and a common purpose with all other teachers in the school, who also operated under the same codes. Janelle exemplified how Eastside’s inspirational structures influenced the way that a teacher developed. At the same time, she also indicated that such inspirational structures influenced other teachers in similar ways.

The language used in Eastside High’s existing documents influenced teacher culture. For instance, the term “crew” was used in the documents to refer to its staff as in the “Crew Handbook” or the document outlining the staff norms called “Disciplines of the Crew.”
excerpt below from the “Disciplines of the Crew” and framed and provided definition and context to the meaning of crew at Eastside.

Discipline, from the Latin, *disciplina*, meaning instruction, is how we train our power within towards living up to something. As crew, we recognize the power between us, and that we all are necessary. As crew, we move in harmony, in synchronicity. Our Disciplines of the Crew center our powers *within* in order to harness our powers *between*. Through this collective power, we move forward together with grace and integrity (2014).

The notion of “crew” indicated a commitment to be individually and collectively disciplined in working hard together towards a common goal. This excerpt reflected a clear value placed on recognizing power in order to work on the self, each other, and in solidarity towards something greater than any one individual. “Living up to something” recognized the power and possibilities of potential. The idea of potential additionally required that one build the discipline to “train” hard in order to reach it. There was also value placed on the ethics underneath the process of reaching for that potential. It must be done with “grace and integrity.” This demonstrated how Eastside attempted to be clear with what they meant.

Crew also manifested itself in the ways that Eastside worked to personalize the development of each teacher by recognizing that each person had a unique set of experiences, skills, dispositions, and ways of learning that was brought into the teaching and influenced overall experiences in the work. From that recognition, Eastside believed it important to learn about each teacher and then provide, by design, ways for that teacher to receive personalized support. Mark, a first year Science teacher, provided an example of the importance of this at Eastside during his beginning-of-the-school year interview,

I think talking with Lisa [one of the Co-Principals] during class, outside the class, getting her perspective on things, talking with or just having a teaching buddy, just people that got more time and more experience, but also are willing to hear about your experience because my experiences are different than everybody else’s. It’s very much the same as everybody else’s, but also unique. (10/2/14)
Mark highlighted the importance of more experienced Crew in the process of supporting teachers in a personalized way. Even though individuals had unique experiences, the culture of the Crew recognized that commonality could still be derived from those experiences in a way where support and guidance could be provided, even if that looked like listening or collaboratively helping the teacher to problem solve. Mark continued to share his experiences with the Crew in supporting his needs in a way that was not judgmental.

I think people just have confidence in you here as well like “If you try your best, we know that you’re trying your best, and we will support you in trying your best” as opposed to “This is what it needs to be or this is exactly what it looks like. If you aren’t doing that, then you’re missing the point.” (Beginning-of-the-school year interview, 10/2/14)

Teachers must be viewed as intellectuals where their capacity for integrating thinking and practice is paramount to improving in their work. Crew must hold such a belief in order to be Crew. When we “Crew up,” we dignify each other’s capacity and capability to make the Crew stronger than any one individual. Mark revealed that the Crew at Eastside dignified each other by recognizing that people were trying their best. That recognition then came with the support to help think through how to become better.

Eastside’s Teacher Satisfaction Survey (September, 2014), which yielded 20 completed responses from people on its staff, revealed some statistics that support the school’s value on building crew. In the survey, there were 16 items that required a response. Fifteen out of 16 items were statements that participants could select from “agree,” “unsure,” or “disagree.” One item allowed for an open-ended narrated response. I grouped survey items into the following categories: Crew, Teacher Support, and Expectations/Communications. The following responses that I placed in the category of “Crew” reflected that more than half their staff had positive perceptions of their interactions at Eastside.

Table 2. Teacher satisfaction survey responses related to crew.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to get along with my colleagues.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The morale in my department/grade level is high.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The morale of the staff in the school is high.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel personally supported at Eastside.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff engages with each other openly and honestly.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through these survey items, Eastside attempted to quantify how teachers felt about each other and their work. No single item appeared anchored to any specific measures or descriptors other than what was written in the statement, which consequently did not necessarily reveal much insight in connection with their mission. However, the spirit behind the totality of these items revealed that even without specific descriptions of “easy to get along,” “morale,” “supported,” and “engages openly and honestly,” people, however they interpreted these things, still felt positive. This could be indicative of Eastside’s sensitivity to how people feel. That is, Eastside wanted people to be and feel humanized.

At Eastside, documents focused on building of “crew” influenced the school culture. In addition to permeating the culture of the school, inspirational structures at Eastside were manifested through literal structures. To articulate a key aspect of teacher development, in Eastside’s Crew Handbook (2014) in the section called, “Professional Teaching and Learning Community,” they identified four mediators to help manifest its vision and mission for its teachers to rise up: 1) Disciplines of the Crew, 2) Instructional Leaders Circle, 3) Roots of the Eastside Educator, and 4) Professional Development. To conserve space and since the Disciplines of the Crew was briefly discussed earlier and will be discussed in more depth later in
this chapter, it has been removed from the documentation below. As such, three of the four mediators will only be presented at this time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>We believe that at the heart of good learning within a school is good teaching. In order to manifest Eastside’s mission of cultivating teachers to humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual, reflective leaders, we believe we must actively and cohesively work to nurture ourselves and each other to become critically grounded and strong practitioners in our craft. To support this mission, we have 4 key mediators: Disciplines of the Crew, The Instructional Leaders Circle, The Roots of the Eastside Educator, and Professional Development.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Instructional Leaders Circle</strong>: The vision for the Instructional Leaders Circle is to mobilize the development of the Roots of the Eastside Educator framework as well as the process by which we support our teachers towards manifesting the framework into reality. In parallel with nurturing the Eastside Educator, we work to create the conditions to nurture our Eastside students as Warrior Intellectuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Roots of the Eastside Educator</strong>: At Eastside, cultivating the Roots of the Eastside Educator within each of us is necessary for nurturing our students to rise up. The Roots of the Eastside Educator is grounded in a humanizing critical pedagogy and sits at the core of professional development at Eastside. The following elements are the Roots of the Eastside Educator:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>- HUMANIZING LOVE: Develop and nurture the ways that you create and manifest the humanizing conditions to act, interact, and react with your students and colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>- CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS &amp; INDIGNATION: Develop and nurture the ways in which you self reflect and gain critical consciousness of what you teach, why you do it, and how you do it with urgency, purpose, and direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>- TEACHER INTELLECTUALS &amp; REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS: Develop and nurture the practices and urgency to learn from existing literature, research, and other practitioners, while also regularly reflecting on your own practice in order to improve as an educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>- HUSTLE, LAYER, FLOW: Develop and nurture the ways in which you actively support the school’s growth by working effectively and productively in alignment with where the school currently is and where it is going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Professional Development at Eastside</strong>: We are always being, but also in process of becoming. Eastside believes that what lies at the heart of student achievement are teachers who are highly skilled at their craft. As such, Professional Development holds great value and importance at Eastside. While the Roots of the Eastside Educator is the framework by which teacher development centers around, there are 5 central structures by which Eastside mediates that development:</td>
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There are four key things to highlight from these school documents about teacher development: 1) theories of action, 2) cohesion amongst each mediator, 3) cohesive architecture of support, and 4) cohesion with the vision, mission, and core values. First, each of these three mediators began with an articulated theory of action (i.e. lines 1-7, 9-13, 15-19, and 36-42) that provided a values-directed frame to the literal structure. Eastside often referred to its theories of action as a “guiding purpose.” The stated guiding purpose of the Roots of the Eastside Educator (lines 15-19), for example, began by identifying a common purpose that was rooted in empowering students to “rise up.” It also named a pedagogical framework – “a humanizing critical pedagogy” -- that grounded how teachers developed the skills and dispositions to facilitate this process of educating students to rise up. Looking at another example, “Professional Development at Eastside,” we see an alignment of key components that makes this guiding purpose an effective theory of action: 1) an explicit assertion of the connection between learning, teaching and culture building, 2) an explicit connection to the school’s mission, 3) an assertion of what teachers must do in order to help manifest that (i.e. results), and 4) four strategies (i.e. structures) in place to mediate numbers one through three. This theory of action also represented the main areas of the instructional core, which illustrated how the teacher, student, and content were related to improving the quality and level of learning.

Second, amongst each mediator, there was common thread that built cohesiveness. The Instructional Leaders Circle (ILC) leveraged school leaders (i.e. teacher leaders, Co-Principals, etc) to collaboratively focus on guiding how teachers developed the Roots of the Eastside
Educator. In essence, the ILC acted as the structure that collectively guided the process and progress of teacher development. The Roots of the Eastside Educator themselves identified the observable skills that teachers were expected to develop, while at the same time developing a particular political identity. Essentially, the Roots of the Eastside Educator identified the “what” in terms of what teachers should be demonstrating. “Professional Development at Eastside” identified five literal structures that mediated where teachers would receive structured opportunities to develop the Roots. Professional Development then acted as the “how, where, and when” for teachers to develop the Roots.

Third, these three mediators along with their subcomponents laid out an architecture of support for teacher development. The explicitness of these documents suggested that Eastside did not desire to leave teacher development to chance. The multiple structures and intentionality behind those structures indicated that Eastside valued and prioritized teacher development. Eastside had a vision for what teachers should become and they were intent on designing ways for teachers to achieve that vision.

Fourth, these three mediators were grounded in the vision, mission, and core values of the school. Their interconnections and interdependencies worked cohesively to outline the literal structures that manifested how the school envisioned what and how teachers should become. If working properly, visionary leadership ensured that teacher development was a key priority with a focus aligned to the school’s inspirational structures. If working properly, teachers received the support to develop in effective ways that were consistent with the stated expectations, whether at the macro level such as what was explicated in the school’s mission or at the micro level such as in building critical consciousness. In concept, these inspirational and literal structures were supposed to work hand in hand synergistically and cohesively.
Tran, a first year English teacher, discussed in her beginning-of-the-school year interview how she experienced the structures of the “Professional Teaching and Learning Community.”

She commented how her experiences were engaging, interactive, and relevant for her,

In professional development we get to know what we’re doing and why it’s important. Even how it connects to our mission and values. We learn and do things that we need. We spend time on getting feedback on performance tasks from peers. We go over advisory curriculum. We talk with other teachers about how they support students in their classroom, how they teach their class. All of these things have been very helpful, and I feel like I'm not wasting my time just sitting through a boring PD, because I like being able to work with folks and not have to hear from one person. We learn how to get better as teachers. (10/1/14)

As a first year teacher in her 2nd month of school, Tran had already experienced teacher development at Eastside as a relevant and productive space. She was able to articulate that professional development (PD) followed theories of action in how she commented on knowing “what we’re doing and why it’s important.” Such theories of action seemed to also be connected with Eastside’s mission and values. Tran’s experience indicated that PD was connected with her growth as a teacher, which was likely in cohesion with the Roots of the Eastside Educator. The numerous items of work that she mentioned suggested that teacher development had an architecture of support where structured spaces like PD addressed the expectations of teachers and the needs they had towards meeting those expectations. Tran’s articulated experience with the whole crew PD space appeared to be in alignment with what Eastside claimed to do. Her understanding of PD reflected that teachers of the professional teaching and learning community were aware of theories of action, understood the connections and cohesion amongst other teacher development structures, received an architecture of support, and clear on the coherence with the vision, mission, and core values.
Eastside made apparent their cohesion through their architecture of support structures. These included figurative inspirational structures that inspired transformative action and literal structures that mediate the everyday practices and school culture. For instance, on the school’s website (2014), there was a section that asked the question, “So what do we do at Eastside?” This question was answered by listing and describing some of their key literal structures: A Humanizing, Knowledge of Self, and Critical Consciousness Raising Curriculum, College Prep Curriculum, Standards Based Grading, College Advising, Performance Assessment and Mastery, Adelante Student Services, and Restorative Praxis to list some. Looking deeper into one of these structures, the description of a “Humanizing, Knowledge of Self, and Critical Consciousness Raising Curriculum” was articulated as follows:

Through their high school journey at Eastside every student will be immersed in curriculum that equips them with the agency and urgency to respect and know themselves, the world, and their situatedness and positionality within it so as to be able to positively affect it. (2014)

As a values-driven description, it drew attention to authentically and critically learning about the self, others, and the world in such a way that built the agency to “positively affect it.” It inspired transformative action. Looking at the description of curriculum a little deeper, we find this “guiding purpose” in the school’s scope and sequence, which was also located within the website (2014),

The curriculum at Eastside is designed to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and agency to become highly educated, humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual and reflective leaders in our community. We discipline ourselves to develop thinking skills and build core knowledge in all content areas. Through the use of key performance assessments and the process of revision, we ensure rigor for all students, and work towards mastery. At the heart of our curriculum, we scaffold towards proficiency in the key areas of mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, historical research, and literary analysis. (2014)
While the actual scope and sequence was a literal structure that guided what was taught in every grade at every subject, the articulation of a “guiding purpose” was a values-driven inspirational structure. Eastside used language from its mission in this guiding purpose when it made a direct connection that the curriculum itself contributed to empowering “students with the knowledge, skills, and agency to become highly educated, humanizing, critically conscious, intellectual and reflective leaders in our community.” The guiding purpose then named specific things related to curriculum and instruction that were important and values-driven, but also pointed to more literal structures such as developing thinking skills, core knowledge, and performance assessment. These literal structures were made apparent in the body of the scope and sequence where every grade level and content area identified 1) an overarching theme for the grade, 2) a theme for the class, 3) topics to be taught in the class, 4) thinking practices, 5) reading strategies, 6) writing traits, 7) critical analysis skills, 8) key theories, 9) personal growth areas, and 10) performance assessments. Because these ten components were consistently identified in every grade level and subject area, they were attempts to structurally build consistency amongst all classes, build proficiency in certain areas that the school valued, and they directly guided the manifestation of the inspirational structures.

Another example to illustrate how Eastside’s inspirational and literal structures manifested at the micro level was shown in what it expected from teachers to build their critical consciousness. Eastside identified “Critical Articles that Form the Foundation of our Theory of Action” in their website (2014). Such critical knowledge aimed to assist teachers to gain the language and theoretical knowledge to talk about and make sense of their previous and current experiences in schooling and society in general. In this particular section of its website, Eastside provided particular readings in the form of hyperlinks for teachers to access and continually
The readings were not suggested. These readings were required for all employees and became anchors for continual dialog as a crew. The availability of these readings on its website displayed a commitment towards what “knowledge” was believed to be important and high leverage enough to act as anchor texts. The following list that was pulled from the website were some of the anchor texts that Eastside identified as “critical articles:”

- *Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete* by Jeff Duncan-Andrade
- *Discipline or Punish? Some Suggestions for School Policy and Teacher Practice* by K. Wayne Yang
- *Warm Demander Pedagogy: Culturally Responsive Teaching that Supports a Culture of Achievement for African American Students* by Franita Ware
- *When Teachers Face Themselves With or Without Understanding* by Martin Haberman
- *Changing the Discourse in Schools* by Eugene Eubanks, Ralph Parish, and Dianne Smith
- *Reflective Voices: Valuing Immigrant Students and Teaching with Ideological Clarity* by Sara Expósito and Alejandra Favela
- *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Student Success* by Sharroky Hollie
- *Discipline that Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom* by Ron & Roxanne Claassen

While this list was certainly not comprehensive of the critical literature that one might read in a doctoral program, it still was one that covered a range of areas that could be considered high
leverage for teachers to know in order to understand where Eastside is situated in terms of educational discourses. Each of the readings contribute to their mission to develop teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners.

For instance, *Note to Educators* by Duncan-Andrade (2009) and *Warm Demander Pedagogy* by Ware (2006) aimed to help teachers understand the critical hope necessary to effectively work with students towards a liberatory education. Such readings aimed to develop teachers’ political perspectives in such a way that helped them develop a practice of urgency and an ethic of care, love, and risk. *Discipline or Punish* by Yang (2009) and *Discipline that Restores* by Claassen & Claassen (2008) reframed the notion of “discipline” as not being about punishment, but rather about learning. Such texts likely intended to help teachers 1) break from the traditional notions of discipline in schools that contain exclusionary systems of exclusion and arbitrary punishments and 2) in their process of developing their political perspectives by provoking them to redirect their gaze back to the conditions of their classrooms rather than on students viewed as problems. Articles such as *Reflective Voices* by Expósito and Favela (2003), *When Teachers Face Themselves* by Haberman (2015), and *Changing the Discourse in Schools* by Eubanks, et. al. (1997) set the gaze back onto teachers, challenging them to look within and examine their ideologies and how they were formed. These readings aimed to cultivate teachers’ political perspectives by provoking them to examine how their language choices, judgments about, and reactions to a student’s behavior reflected dominant ideologies that pathologized certain young people. Each of these readings provided the critical perspective for teachers to humanize themselves and their students. Each of these readings worked to build critical consciousness about the inequitable structure of schooling. Each of these readings engaged teachers intellectually while also evoking them to be reflective about their practice.
One anchor text that teachers constantly referred to at Eastside was *Warm Demander Pedagogy* (Ware, 2006). Heather, a first year U.S. History teacher, drew specific attention to how she not only continued to be inspired while working within Eastside, but also that she was “pushed,”

Before I got here I already had a sense of the space and some of the people who have been here. That kinda drew me to Eastside specifically. It's like 'oh I know that school,' and it has a reputation for being like an organizing type of institution. Even when I tell people that I teach at Eastside, they're like ‘I know that you guys do a lot of stuff around organizing, and I see the kids around and about in Oakland doing stuff, being involved.’ And that awareness matches up to Eastside’s mission and vision, so, warrior intellectuals, critically conscious people, and on the webpage you see someone with a book on Assata. All that really inspired me. Then there’s the work and things we learn do here that makes us really look inside ourselves, how to build cohesion in our classes, like certain pedagogies like Warm Demander where we even get examples that pushes me. (Beginning-of-the-school year interview, 10/5/14)

It is common for first year teachers to be preoccupied with “class management.” Heather, a first year teacher who was in fact struggling with “managing” her classroom according to other data sources, did not mention “class management.” She highlighted “cohesion” and “Warm Demander.” She shared that her journey at Eastside already included a process of examining herself, which was likely catalyzed by “certain pedagogies like Warm Demander.” Her discussion of such a critical article and how it permeated her practice was grounded in what attracted and inspired her about Eastside.

In this beginning-of-the-school year interview, Heather also discussed a number of things that were easily located in the school’s documentation. She alluded to being attracted to Eastside because of its reputation in the local community as well as what she found in the school’s website. Like the other focal participants, Heather not only reflected that the school’s mission and vision inspired her, but that they also “matched up” to the reality of what teachers and students did. She also drew attention to certain terminologies that were used to describe teachers
at Eastside such as, “warrior intellectuals” and “critically conscious.” While this language was certainly easily accessible through the school’s website, the fact that she mentioned these in her interview suggested that she identified with such language and perhaps was inspired to develop an identity associated with those terms. This identification with such an identity was not an isolated incident as evidenced by some of the earlier testimonies shared by the other participants. Because of that common experience, identity development for teachers at Eastside was not left to chance. Structures and the school culture aimed towards developing a certain type of teacher – one who was a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner.

Such existing documentation about Eastside’s program at the time of this research was key to more complexly discussing how they stressed the importance of culture and structure. Beginning-of-the-school year interviews from the focal participants provided another texture to understand this intersection of culture and structure at Eastside. What was also of importance to understanding Eastside’s motivation behind their intentionality to culture and structure was the historical context of its earlier years. That is, the culture and structure of Eastside evolved in a particular way out of a particular necessity. This next section will analyze some older school documentation, some testimonies from beginning-of-the-school year interviews of two teachers who had more history at Eastside than the other four, and my own narrative to examine how as well as why that evolution occurred.

The Journey to Today

While the original charter petition (2006) reflected philosophical detail about “What it means to be an ‘educated person’ in the 21st century,” “How learning best occurs,” and what “Key strategies” the school was intending to use to actualize those beliefs, the most visible
guiding principles of the school were its mission and the Habits of Mind and Heart (Eastside charter petition, 2006):

The mission of Eastside High School is to empower students with the skills and knowledge to pursue higher education and become leaders in the world. Eastside High School will also provide an environment for training educators to become leaders in secondary school reform.

Habits of Mind and Heart:

- The Habit of Perspectives & Evidence
  Addressing questions from multiple viewpoints and using a variety of ways to solve problems and bringing together relevant information, judging the credibility of sources, finding out for one’s self

- The Habit of Connections
  Looking for patterns and for ways in which things fit together in order to bring together diverse material and form solutions

- The Habit of Convention
  Meeting accepted standards in any academic area in order to be understood and to understand others; adhering to appropriate guidelines for the different environments one is in such as school, internship sites, etc.

- The Habit of Perseverance
  Seeing things through and staying in there even in the face of adversity

- The Habit of Exploration & Innovation
  Seeking and being open to new experiences and ideas; taking risks and meeting challenges; creatively coming up with new solutions and ideas

- The Habit of Collaboration
  Accepting and giving assistance; working with diverse groups of people

- The Habit of Leadership & Integrity
  Taking initiative in the service of the common good; doing the right thing even when no one is looking; acting ethically, with honesty and compassion for others

This is clearly a different framework than what was presented in the beginning of this chapter. While there are some commonalities from these inspirational structures to the current vision, mission, and core values, there are more differences. The following description
illuminates the trajectory of the school’s culture and structure from Eastside’s 2006 mission and Habits of Heart and Mind to where it is today.

In the 2010-2011 school year, due to different circumstances, both founding Co- Principals transitioned from their roles beginning in the Fall semester. By the beginning of the Spring semester, a founding teacher/instructional lead and I transitioned into the Co-Principal roles together. While both of us were experienced in some type of school leadership, and I also with experience as an Executive Director of a Youth Development non-profit institution, we were both novice principals. We decided our first task would be to take stock of what was happening at the school by evaluating how the structural design and mission of the school was being manifested in everyday culture and operations – in the classroom, in the hallways, transition spaces, outside in the commercial plaza. The ways in which we set out to do this was by no means very structured and systematic, especially by qualitative research standards. Nonetheless, as novice principals, we had to collect some forms of data from multiple sources in order to be strategic with how to be effective within our new roles. As such, we set out to do multiple classroom observations of each teacher. We interviewed some teachers to ask them what they thought was effective and challenging about the school. We observed the culture of the staff and students. We gathered curriculum from each department. We examined the intersection between certain expectations of students and staff and what structures were in place to support those expectations.

By the end of that Spring semester, we discovered a few key problematic areas that essentially set our course over the next five years. Because of their direct influence to this current research, I will highlight only some of those discoveries. To be clear, I will not discuss what was effective within the school, since those areas were not directly related to this research.
Given the limited data that could speak to the historical context of the school, I will mainly discuss these issues from my perspective, while occasionally invoking the voices of some of the participants who have been at the school for a few years, instead of reflecting any collective work and discoveries.

The root of many problematic areas within the school stemmed from having little structure and systems that affected teachers and students. This included a lack in some of the basic components of what a school should focus on: teaching and learning. That is, there was no codified scope, sequence, curricular framework, instructional framework, and classroom curriculum as well as a lack of formal teacher coaching and evaluation structure. Karla, English Department Lead, was beginning her fourth year at Eastside when this research began. She discussed the impact of not having certain structures or resources in her beginning-of-the-school-year interview,

Structurally the fact that we're a small school and we don't have a lot of the things that district schools have, and a lot of those things are human resources. People take up the things in district schools someone else would be doing. Its long hours, so I feel like folks work a lot more at our school than they would at another school. Whether it's constantly create new curriculum, cause we don't have set curriculum or because we teach something new every year. I've never taught the same class twice at Eastside. Never. I've been here 4 years. I've never taught the same class twice. Even though I've taught the same grade level, it's never been the same class. And that makes a difference when you're constantly creating curriculum. That's rough, and so I think folks with families and obligations outside of school, I think it's probably hardest on them. I think it contributes to the burnout and turnover. I think it's only sustainable if this is the only thing you do. So until something changes structurally, I don't know how sustainable it is, for folks who don't live and breath just Eastside. (10/2/14)

Karla spoke about an all-too-common phenomena with new schools that operate in start-up mode. The cognitive load is demanding on teachers, particularly for teachers new to the school and novice teachers, who struggle with just about everything in their first few years, period. There is a lot to figure out behind the scenes, yet there is no reprieve from what must happen all day,
everyday, beginning at 8:30am: teaching. Karla indicated that each year, she developed the curriculum as she taught it. Then she started over the next school year, with once again creating curriculum as she taught it. Such a demand is also physically taxing and time consuming. She raised her concerns about sustainability and asserted that something structural must change. Not having enough structures in place, especially for the basics of what happens in a school, teaching, is a quick way to fall apart, not only as an institution, but also for the people who work in that institution -- the teachers.

Eric, the current social studies department lead was in his third year with Eastside by the time he conducted his beginning-of-the-year interview for this research. He arrived at Eastside a year after Karla to teach Humanities, which combined English and social studies together into a one hour and forty-five minute block. In his beginning of the year interview, he discussed the impact that coming into the school when it lacked certain structures had on him.

And it was hard, really hard. There were days where I just didn't want to do it. There were days I would check in with folks and I’d be in tears, because it was hard. I didn't know how to teach writing or reading. That's not what I was trained to do, you know. And then, I had a really difficult advisory with a challenging group of kids. We didn't have a school social worker at the time, so a lot of the socio-emotional stuff that young people were going through went through the Advisor. As my 1st year, not only balancing staying afloat in my classes, was to like keep these young people coming to school, keeping them alive. And I don't think I was as successful as I could have been. I felt like half of my advisory were counseled out, especially the young men, because not necessarily because of me, but because of their experiences were before I got there, right. And so even though I created some great relationships with them that still last today, it was tough to see the leave. We didn't have a grading system in place. We were putting grades in excel worksheets and things like that which was really frustrating, and really frustrated me, because I didn't know how to tell students what their grades were unless I had to give them these handwritten progress reports, which took a lot of time and energy. I felt like I almost had too much freedom as a humanities teacher. I could teach whatever I wanted with this new system we were developing that year called these learning targets, these new standards based grading system, which was new for the entire school. That whole year we didn't have a set curriculum, set learning targets, which was really challenging for me as a new teacher. Because it was too much freedom, not enough structure and guidance, right, 'cause we were all learning it. (10/5/14)
Eric, who was trained as a social studies teacher, reflected upon his challenges from his first year at Eastside that resulted from the school lacking in core structures. That is, the school was lacking in what I call “high leverage structures.” These structures would help teachers know what to teach, how to assess it, and how to build and sustain a cohesive classroom community. Structures in these areas are high leverage, because they have great impact. Having these structures in place as an institution would have helped teachers like Eric focus more on day-to-day instruction rather than on learning and adjusting to everything. These are bare minimum things that teachers need in order to feel supported and set up for success. The cognitive and emotional demand was high for Eric, and it is a wonder that he returned to Eastside after that first year.

In Karla’s beginning-of-the-school year interview, she revealed how both Eric’s and her earlier testimony indicated problematic areas with school culture at Eastside.

I think culturally the hardest thing is our teacher turnover, teacher retention. It's hard to build culture among staff when we're constantly building with new people. And so that's hard and it's hard for our students too. It's hard for them when they're seniors and they're looking for letters of recommendation but their teachers aren't here anymore. Or it's hard when they're going through stuff but the teachers they have aren't the teachers that know them. Or teachers never really get to know them because they've known them for a long time. (10/2/14)

Although she did not mention it in this excerpt, her reflection about teacher turnover is partly a result of the lack of structure. In this passage, she revealed that her earlier concerns about burnout and sustainability had cultural consequences. She indicated that having a revolving door of teachers were challenging for both teachers and students. For students in particular, Karla alluded to the importance and value of teachers knowing them well and over time. Inconsistent staffing can directly interrupt that ability for all students to be known well by at least one adult in
the school. The cultural implications of high teacher turnover not only impacted relationship building, but also the consistency of student experiences and interactions in each classroom.

In many ways, these inconsistencies with relationship building problematized the lack of structure and system around what most call “student discipline,” but what I later (beginning in 2012) reframed and gradually systematized as “restorative praxis.” I believe this lack of structure, particularly around curriculum, instruction, and “student discipline,” resulted in inconsistent curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions made by teachers, which resulted in inconsistent experiences and expectations for students. This, in turn, created stressful situations for students and teachers. These stressful conditions for teachers, in particular, also resulted in an unhealthy culture amongst the staff. The lack of such structures and systems revealed significant differences in ideology and political perspectives amongst the teachers. Without a way to operationalize those liberatory but difficult frameworks that break from the ideological norm of teaching and schooling, such as critical pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, or restorative justice, then teachers who do not yet possess a certain degree of clarity in what, how, and why they do what they do as well as the disposition to remain steadfast in that clarity during times of great stress and tension, would inevitably waver and follow more traditional ways of teaching and interacting with youth. That is, a teacher’s values and ideals would be put to the test. When push comes to shove, the rhetoric of social justice sometimes could get thrown out the door. Among other places, this is what I certainly saw at Eastside. So then what structures and systems could cultivate and nurture a culture where teachers and students could work together towards a truly equitable education that was liberatory? What were those conditions, at the very minimum, that needed to be in place in order for such a lofty goal to have a glimmer of hope in a sustainable way?
For starters, I believed that a clearer and more explicit set of inspirational structures needed to be developed. I first started by examining the ways that the staff interacted with each other. What existed to guide the ways that staff interacted with each other was a list of about twenty “staff norms,” which had preceded my arrival to the school. I learned that the list of norms was developed over time as problems came up. They were essentially a list of reactions that seemed to never address the root problems. In order to shift staff culture, these norms seemed like the place to start. Through a careful process led by me with the entire staff, what was developed to replace those norms was a more philosophical set of guiding wisdoms called the Disciplines of the Crew (website, 2014):

**Like the seasons, time cannot be contained, yet everyone’s experience is contained within it.**
Know the difference between your time, everyone’s time, & our time together. It’s important to be present, on time, & focusing your mind on where your feet are.

**Act like water, flowing through and around obstacles, and still always moving.**
The strength of water is in its acceptance of the right now (Patience) while steadily moving forward (Impatience). Accept the brutal facts right now, yet have the unwavering commitment to move through it with integrity, equity, and solutions-orientation.

**The river does not try to be the mountains.**
Speak your truth. Act your truth. Be direct, honest, & open to critique, while being aware of who you are, who you’re becoming, your impact to others, and how you live your words with love.

**Listen to the wind to know which direction to move.**
Listen with the intent to understand. Let action flow from understanding. Don’t get caught up in your own response and missing an opportunity to learn from an interaction.

**Lay the path carefully and lovingly stone by stone.**
Things don’t happen with ease overnight. Be aware of your process of becoming. Be an active part of the school’s process of becoming. Know where the two intersect, when you need help, and be ready to help others.

**Keep the power of the river growing with the streams that flow into it.**
Keep the larger mission & purpose in mind. Our collective work is bigger than any one of us, but each of us is still needed. Know each other. Build with each other. That will be our strength. (Eastside website, 2014)

Though it was not shown here because it was cited earlier in this chapter, this text began with a theory of action that framed its meaning and significance. The six “disciplines” shown here, which followed the theory of action, as acted both as literal structures and inspirational structures. That is, even though they provided guidance on how the staff should act, interact, and respond towards each another, these disciplines were offered in a holistic way that positioned people as humans, as critical thinkers working together in solidarity for the long haul. These disciplines started the movement towards conceiving of the need to develop teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners.

With such little structure and inconsistent school culture, the Disciplines of the Crew could only do so much. What would keep teachers like Karla and Eric at the school in a way where they felt that the work was worth it for the long haul? Eric indicated in the excerpt discussed earlier that there was “too much freedom, not enough structure and guidance.” What would help teachers have some autonomy, but in a way that was cohesively aligned with structures that reflected what the school valued? If teachers facing not enough structure and guidance, then while they might have the freedom to teach about agency and self determination by studying the Zapatistas of Mexico, but they could also religiously follow a more traditional curriculum that solely focused on nation-building canonized events. The Disciplines of the Crew might have intended to impact teacher culture more positively, but what inspirational structure could provide clear overall direction?

The school mission could have provided that clear overall direction. When the Disciplines of the Crew were implemented, the school mission was as follows,
To empower students with the skills and knowledge to pursue higher education and become leaders in the world. Eastside High School will also provide an environment for training educators to become leaders in secondary school reform (Original charter petition, 2006).

This mission certainly highlighted certain things that were valued: student empowerment, going to college, and becoming leaders. Since there were not enough structures and systems put in place, how could Eastside ensure that at least these three things systematically occurred? What could define the kinds of “skills,” “knowledge,” and “leaders” that were valued and expected to be developed?

In the 2012-2013 school year, with the Instructional Leaders Circle, a team of teacher and program leaders, I led us on a lengthy process to revise the mission, create a vision statement (i.e. there was no articulated vision in the original charter), and revise our articulated set of values in order to simplify, yet create more specificity and potential for alignment amongst all the programmatic subcomponents of the school. That work of designing and improving systems and structures that determined how all our actions aligned with the school’s vision, mission, and core values have continued to this day. That work also catalyzed the school to ask deep questions about how it was falling short of manifesting those inspirational structures on an everyday level, particularly as it related to the work of teachers. How could the school design a teacher recruitment and interview process that more robustly identified appropriate candidates who were suited for the work at hand? How could the school support novice teachers better? How could the school retain teachers and help them feel competent and confident in what they are doing and where they are improving? How could Eastside systematically support and continuously develop all teachers to live up to what the school valued, what it believed, and what it sought out to do over the long haul? What were those things that the school believed it wanted its teachers to
actually live up to? How could the school build the capacity of teachers to be effective leaders who could be stewards of those values and beliefs in a way that continually deepened the work as well as all the people involved with it?

These were the questions that provoked and drove the initiation of this research. As the research was underway, an interplay amongst the school’s inspirational structures, literal structures, and school culture started to surface in a way that indicated the kinds of clarity, direction, and guidance that Karla and Eric might have benefitted from during their earlier years at Eastside. This interplay between structures and culture also might explain why teachers like Karla and Eric remained, while others left or were asked to leave. The following chapters will then examine more deeply how the culture and structure of the school influenced both teacher leaders and novice teachers into a process of becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners.
CHAPTER 5

Novice Teachers Emerging as Politically Determined Pedagogues

Three of the six focal teachers were in their first year of credentialed teaching and their first year at Eastside High. Like new teachers everywhere, the first years are often the most difficult. The conditions that support their development are crucial in order for them to remain in the profession and become competent and confident educators. This chapter examined the way that the cultural and structural conditions at Eastside High influenced these three teachers’ processes of becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners. Data sources used were beginning-of-the-school year interviews, participant narratives, field notes created from observations of teacher collaborations, end-of-school-year interviews, and memos created from one-on-one check in sessions, participant meetings, and interviews. Data analysis procedures from Phases two through four as noted in the methods chapter were followed.

The research questions of this study were posed to understand the journey of the focal teachers to develop as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners. As such findings were reported within these four categories and indicated that teacher development was also linked to their overall development of their political perspectives. Concomitantly, findings revealed that teachers developed in ways that demonstrated that these four categories were not as discrete as they appeared. Data analysis procedures allowed for co-occurrences of coding. As such, the findings indicated that teachers’ development in one category also affected and consequently demonstrated development in other categories. That is, growth as a humanizing practitioner usually increased growth as a critically conscious practitioner. Growth as a critically conscious practitioner sometimes influenced growth as a
humanizing practitioner. Demonstration as an intellectually engaged practitioner always required work as a reflective practitioner, which in turn contributed to growth as a humanizing and/or critically conscious practitioner. While this chapter could certainly have been organized to present findings discretely by teacher rather than by the four categories that were linked to the research questions and school’s mission, I believe that attention might have been taken away from illuminating the ways in which Eastside’s cultural and structural conditions affected growth. Organizing this chapter by the four categories as the macro structure (versus by the three teachers) still provided an analysis of how the data reflected teacher growth, but in a way that indicated that the categories of humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective should be less considered as separate buckets and more as layers within a single bucket.

*Humanizing Practitioners*

Prior to finishing her English credential, Tran had experiences working with middle school youth in an afterschool setting. Elements of her initial understanding of herself as a humanizing practitioner were reflected in the quote below from her beginning-of-the-school year interview.

> For me, it’s important having a strong culture of understanding where we come from, and the need to use that education to liberate ourselves, you know. So I feel like with that foundation, it's very easy to come in as a teacher to talk about why I'm here and what I can offer to students, you know. And because of that, it was easier for me to build with my class. To even like the simple things like having community agreements, to tell them like these are the things that we need to make sure that we have a fun, but also productive classroom. You know like the language around like we are intellectuals, you know. So that as far as classroom cohesion, it made it easier to build with my class. (10/2/14)

The idea of “education to liberate ourselves,” which stemmed from “where we come from” was reflective of her ethic of care and sense of revolutionary love, which were crucial parts of both a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner concerned with the liberation of her students. However, Tran stopped at naming the idea of education for liberation and did not additionally
describe what students should be liberated from, which made her response at first seem more cliché than philosophy. Yet, while beginning as an intellectually engaged and reflective practitioner, Tran also continued her development in these areas as she also increased her sense of political clarity.

Because of Tran’s emerging political perspectives, she then gravitated to the practical – what she did in her classroom. This preoccupation with concrete and practical application without being very clear about the rationales behind such application was consistent with other first year teachers. Her comments about community agreements being a balance of “things we need” in order to have a fun and productive space in conjunction with developing the identity of her students as “intellectuals” so as to build classroom cohesion indicated elements of a humanizing pedagogy that recognized the empowerment of youth towards increasing their agency. Development of such agency was also a concern for a critically conscious pedagogy. Such agency would enable her students to be in greater positions of active critical engagement, which is a crucial component to nurture for a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner.

In addition to building active critical engagement from students, as a humanizing practitioner Tran demonstrated an ethic of care with her students that was revealed in her concern for their welfare as discussed in her beginning-of-the-school year interview,

I remember meeting you, G, at the Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, when you presented about Eastside high school and the work that y’all do. I felt it was really fitting to like you know, where I want to be as a teacher. I want to be at a school that not only put like nice posters on the wall that talks about social justice, but really teach about it, you know. Really teach about history and our culture and also it's in the same neighborhood you know, where I grew up, like my family still like lives like three minutes away from here, so it’s really definitely like home to be able to teach in the community where I grew up in. ‘Cause I would hate to go, I mean it's fine for some people, but I don't wanna go to a different community where I can't really connect to the students, but it just feels good to come back and work with our students. We may not have the same struggles, but we know what it's like to grow up in this community, and see the different struggles we have to face. (10/2/14)
In this segment, Tran revealed an ethic of care as central to her emerging political perspective as a humanizing practitioner as well as a critically conscious one. Such an ethic motivated her purpose for teaching, what she wanted to teach, and to whom she wanted teach. She reflected a concern for students’ lives when she discussed connecting with students and the struggles they face. These students were not just any students. They were students who were growing up in the same neighborhood where she did. They were likely facing similar struggles that she faced. Students were humanized to a very personal level to her. To her, that commonality was important, even if they did not share the same ethnic background. She mentioned “our” culture, but Tran was Vietnamese and her students were predominantly Latino. To that point, who was she actually referring to when she commented on not being able to connect to students from a “different community?” Her home community where Eastside was located seemed to drive her desire to remain in her community and commit to being an agent of “social justice.” Did that mean that she would not be an agent of social justice in another community? Did she mean any “different” community? Or perhaps she was referring to certain “different” communities such as those that were suburban, or higher in socioeconomic status, or dominantly White. It was not clear. What did she even mean when she mentioned “social justice?” With more political clarity through the process of developing as an intellectually engaged and reflective practitioner, in time Tran should be able to articulate more of what she meant and why. At this point during her career, Tran seemed to have a solid base that was rooted in community transformation, which was well primed for growth in alignment with Eastside. She had a concern for authentically teaching about unjust social arrangements and not merely having a superficial aesthetic that implied it. Making such a distinction suggested that a true revolutionary aesthetic fueled her
political perspectives. How would the cultural and structural conditions of Eastside continue to nurture her growth?

Throughout the school year, Tran, like many teachers new to the profession, devoted a lot of time and energy into the practical – the what’s and the how to’s. As this was developmentally appropriate for her as a new teacher, her narratives from her journal entries primarily reflected such preoccupation. Her demonstration of being a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner was revealed in her journal entries, which focused greatly on what she was teaching, how students responded, and her overall classroom cohesion. For instance, in a journal entry from January, Tran wrote,

This week went pretty well! We learned about feminism/feminist and I decided to make it more engaging for students by using Beyoncé as the main topic of discussion. Students had to write an analytical paragraph on whether Beyoncé is a feminist or what. I was surprised at how engaged and productive they were when it came to writing! They wrote quietly for about forty minutes during class. After writing, I realized that some students needed more scaffolding. When I realized that, I quickly added sentence starters on the board so students could use it. For the most part, their writing has improved since the beginning of the school year! I think that doing small writing sessions really help them improve their writing. I want to do that more!

Side note: I still struggle with some young men in my 9A crew! They are extremely playful and chatty; it’s hard for them to stay focused. I have gotten to a point where I am extra strict with them, so they know exactly what my expectations are. They are just playful and are often distracted. I wonder what I can do to support them so they won’t get so distracted. (1/24/15)

This excerpt from Tran’s journal provided evidence of her development as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner. Tran and I met weekly and mostly focused on coaching her through her curriculum and instruction. The idea of doing “small writing sessions” came out of one of our Fall semester check in sessions. We discussed how providing frequent practice with and feedback on writing that targeted specific skills could catalyze quicker growth than having only infrequent writing as larger performance tasks. In this
journal entry, Tran discussed how doing the smaller writing sessions was yielding positive results, but she also shared how this particular assignment was rooted in something relevant to youth popular culture – the music artist, Beyoncé Knowles. Using Beyoncé’s music was certainly validating, rather than denying, of youth culture as a valid source of educational exploration, which represented an aspect of being a humanizing pedagogue. What made this particular assignment strong, as an example of humanizing pedagogy is its usage of feminism as a critical lens to evaluate whether Beyoncé was a feminist or not. Rather than reducing culture to a set of practices and interests from a particular group, Tran opened up the political dimensions of culture. This demonstrated her development as a critically conscious and intellectually engaged practitioner. Appropriating a feminist lens not only sought to develop a critical consciousness within students, it did so through an intellectually engaging process. Through examining popular culture, Tran also brought students into the intellectual discourse of feminism.

Tran’s “side note” demonstrated her development as a reflective practitioner. The side note revealed a common theme that novice teachers explored: “class management.” She spent some time discussing some young men from her “9A crew,” which was a label that represented one of the cohorts of 9th graders she taught. While she did not devote any time reflecting on why these particular young men were “playful and chatty,” she did later wonder how she could support them better so that they wouldn’t get so distracted. The humanizing pedagogue spends considerable time building the conditions for students to operate at their best. Part of this process includes examining the conditions, how students respond within them, and then reflecting upon the significance of the connections between the two. Tran, as an emerging humanizing and reflective practitioner exemplified a developmentally appropriate line of
thinking – what can I do to help my students improve? The more experienced humanizing practitioner would also examine the question – what is holding my students back and why?

At Tran’s end-of-the-school year interview, she demonstrated growth in her clarity of purpose in that she was able to more precisely highlight how she manifested her revolutionary love and ethic of care. In being asked about how her political perspectives evolved this past year, she responded,

I think I’m more clear now. I actually really like theory, because it’s helping me understand things at a deeper level. As I keep practicing my teaching and my education, I keep getting new things. My students are also different because everyday I’m like, ‘these are the practices that I need to practice or these are the things that I need to experience with my students.’ I feel like it just depends on the situation and depends on the students depending on what I’ve learned about my own my practice as a teacher and as a learner is always evolving. My own purpose as a teacher is evolving just like identity, right? I’m young, loud, opinionated, passionate. I’m an Asian woman working in a predominantly Latino school, and I was worried that I wasn’t gonna get, not necessarily the respect, but that my students wouldn’t want to listen to me. But I feel throughout this whole process, I found that balance of being able to connect with students, which is really an important part of my purpose. I feel like teaching about our culture and our history is important, but community for me is also a really big deal. If I cannot build community with my students then what’s the purpose of me being somewhere, you know. So I think that’s the root of everything -- having a strong community where everyone feels good about themselves and each other, and I feel like that’s what has kept me going and that helped me find out really more about what the students need and where I need to start in terms of helping them confront inequity. (6/1/15)

While there was still a preoccupation with the practical component of classroom cohesion when she highlighted her concern for students listening to her, she did so in a way that elevated what value “listening” had – to connect, to build community. Tran essentially reflected that students must feel better about themselves before effectively doing any social transformation. This was an essential piece of her revolutionary love and work as a humanizing practitioner. “Feeling better” was where she believed she needed to “start.” Building the community was an act of sharing of power with her students in order to interact in egalitarian and meaningful ways, while
also recognizing, valuing, and using her students’ life experiences and previously acquired knowledge and skills. Tran realized that part of her purpose as a teacher was to build a strong community, which helped her break down any interpersonal barriers in order understand what students needed. This, in turn, helped her to get to the grander purpose of facing and fighting inequities.

Again, it was not clear what she meant by “inequity,” nor her gravitation to highlighting “culture” and “history.” Such generalizations, however, are not unusual coming from novice teachers, whether at the beginning or the end of their first year. What was important was her demonstration of reflexivity, that is, being a reflective practitioner. Whether through theory or her experiences, her ability to be reflexive revealed that she believed that she was still a learner and still evolving. As an intellectually engaged practitioner, this was significant, because she realized her process of becoming required active participation in her learning. She believed she was “more” clear in what she did, how she did it, and why. She did not say she was “clear now.” Her usage of the word “more” reflected that she knew she was engaged in a process. A teacher who buys into such a process usually allows herself to be open to learning and not fearful of showing that she does not know it all. As a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner, this was essential, because it would encourage her to more fully engage in an ethic of risk that would allow her to discipline herself to best support her students to not only achieve academic greatness, but also to engage in the psychological and political process necessary to navigate an oppressive society while seeing themselves as deserving of achieving excellence.

Humanizing practitioners not only engaged in an ethic of risk with their students. They also engaged in such an ethic with their colleagues. Science teacher, Mark, experienced this.
practice at Eastside. Mark’s experiences with being humanized by his fellow teachers were revealed in conversations with others about his actions.

Prior to being credentialed, Mark had some experiences in working with young people through a science education organization. Though he was of mixed race, Jewish and African American, he phenotypically looked White. He was raised in an urban city within a half hour drive of Eastside High where he attended a Jewish-centered high school.

Mark discussed in his beginning-of-the-year interview how Eastside had culture of teachers who humanized each other as fellow teachers. He shared his experience with being questioned by others about his practices early on at Eastside,

I've never had somebody here say 'no, you're wrong.' I know that's a small thing. Like people ask me, 'why do you think that,' which is just way different than like, 'man, Mark, you just messed up the entire school culture, how could you possibly do that?' (10/2/14)

Being aware of how his colleagues problematize a situation is highly reflective. As a reflective practitioner, Mark indicated how he had experienced a variety of interactions with others at Eastside in relation to discussions about students. He revealed that there was a cultural norm that people did not make assumptions and place blame towards other teachers. Teachers at Eastside were not supposed to pathologize, they problematized. The belief was that if teachers could deconstruct their thoughts and behaviors and be made aware when they were contributing to the hegemonic culture of schooling which sorted students by privileging certain types of students and hindering others, then they could reject such behavior. The normalization of asking questions like, “why do you think that” allowed the person asking the question to open a potentially authentic dialog that sought to understand the underlying ideologies of a comment. Understanding what lied underneath a comment then invited a more appropriately critical discussion that could perhaps be anchored back to any critical knowledge previously learned or
towards new critical knowledge that could best respond to the situation at hand. The person being asked the question, if he believed that it was a “normal” question that was not intending to judge but rather to problem solve and assist, could allow himself to be more vulnerable and willing to engage in a dialog rather than being defensive or simply shutting down. This process suggested that the questioning and subsequent dialog was about being of assistance and helping, rather than “making someone feel bad” and alienating. Such a practice was also exemplary of the kind of critical care that asserted that achieving a higher understanding of the self was for the sake of “our” students.

Engaging in a humanizing pedagogy with each other as colleagues helped to deepen their culture of building crew. It also helped in developing the individuals in the crew to become stronger pedagogues. For Mark, despite sometimes facing cognitive dissonance with his prior knowledge or beliefs throughout his process, he was able to build upon his evolving political perspectives rather than shutting down and maintaining a fixed mindset. For instance, in one journal entry, he reflected upon his development of political perspectives within the space of Eastside as he examined his own self,

I think I've had to learn a lot about myself to be in this space -- like understanding my own privilege, just understanding that I'm making micro aggressions in class that I cannot perceive, and I need to work through and be like 'why did I act that way, what does that mean, why am I still feeling this way.' Also the positive things like, 'wow, I was actually able to talk about that. I didn't know I'd be able to talk about that.' People have a growth mindset around teachers as well as for students. And I mean like from the administration. I know they expect me to grow and they expect me to be better today than I was yesterday. And definitely better than I was in December. (1/12/15)

Mark demonstrated a humanizing process within the school in how he was experiencing his growth as an educator. His acquisition of new knowledge as an intellectually engaged practitioner met with a cognitive dissonance that was supported with the structured self-reflection that activated himself as a reflective practitioner. This process, which also exemplified
the critically conscious practitioner being engaged in a cycle of Critical Praxis, led to action. In Mark’s particular case, he highlighted actions that were nuanced to a more introspective level. He confronted himself by examining his behaviors, his thoughts, and his feelings. This endeavor of confronting the self certainly caused Mark to continuously examine his beliefs and values and how they have manifested in his actions, reactions, and responses. Asking those questions such as “Why did I act that way,” “What does that mean,” and “Why am I still feeling this way,” were the types of inquiries that allowed teachers like Mark to feel humanized, while critically understanding the interplay between how society had shaped him and how his reflexivity evoked his growth. This, in turn allowed him to internalize that process as being one necessary for his growth, which he seemed to believe that others at the school were invested.

Mark’s actions of examining his ideologies and values also reflected the type of critical care required to be more than simply “nice.” Through his teacher development at Eastside, he learned that despite “best intentions,” without a critical exploration of himself as well as how students of color struggled within unequal and inequitable systems, that he could actually participate in an institutional practice of not caring for students. This particular process in his development was not meant to be comfortable, because he had to confront insecurities, fears, and shortcomings about himself in order to learn from and move beyond what he discovered. Mark did this when he realized he needed to work through various micro aggressions he might exhibit towards his students, perhaps as a result of the privilege he sometimes did not always notice. His commitment to work through those things within the school’s humanizing conditions reflected his emerging ethic of care and therefore his journey of deepening his political perspective.

While Heather also provided evidence of her process of becoming a humanizing practitioner, data will be provided to analyze her growth in the next section on Critically
Conscious Practitioners. Discussing her more at length in the next section will concomitantly act as a bridge in the ways she acted as a humanizing, critically conscious, and intellectually engaged practitioner.

**Critically Conscious Practitioners**

Eastside’s endeavor to develop critically conscious practitioners went hand in hand with developing humanizing pedagogues. As a social studies teacher, Heather taught U.S. History, mainly to 11\(^{th}\) graders. Though she never knew Mark until Eastside, she also grew up in the same urban city as him, where she attended a high performing public high school. Like Tran, she was of Asian descent, but unlike Tran who was Vietnamese, Heather’s ethnic heritage was Korean. Before Heather went to the east coast to begin her teaching credential program, she worked with young people in an after school setting in the same city as Eastside to learn how to fix and avidly ride bicycles.

In Heather’s beginning-of-the-school year interview, she articulated a clarity of purpose in her description of why she wanted to teach at Eastside. She reflected,

> I wanted to work in a place I knew. I was excited to be able to be a person who could relate to, be invested in wherever it was that I was teaching, and having connections to the place and also the people. It's important to me because I want to feel connected to where I'm working. I want to be excited about where I'm going to work and part of that is being invested in a place. I came to the conclusion that it made sense for me to do intentional social justice, anti-displacement work where I was from or have done some work or have invested in some way and put my time into creating things and building relationships with people. Maybe some of my old students will come to Eastside. That's what makes me excited to be here, because the continuity of it. Places are real. Places exist because of the people. And the people make the place. And so wanting to do something that impacts the space but needing folks to help me build and learn, learn from it. All that is already here and it made sense to me. (10/5/14)

As an emerging critically conscious practitioner, Heather mentioned a few times in her full beginning-of-the-school year interview her passion for community organizing, particularly around “anti-displacement” work. In the excerpt above, she brought it up once, but said the
word “place” six times. This suggested that her connection to “place” was related to her commitment to honoring the members of the local community and countering the imposition of gentrification. As a humanizing practitioner, she recognized that place was significant because of the people. When she indicated, “people make the place,” Heather’s demonstration as a humanizing practitioner drew attention to her concern for building meaningful relationships. As part of her political perspectives, this notion of commitment to and building relationships with the members of a community and the “place” where they lived over time was significant to her. It influenced where she wanted to teach and for what purpose. In this regard Heather articulated more clarity than Tran in the way that she focused on what she meant by “social justice.” At the same time, it was not clear whether she conceived of “social justice anti-displacement” work as something she desired to connect to her subject area, U.S. History, or if was something separate that was more related to her “organizing” interests. While Heather highlighted making connections, building relationships, and impacting the space, during the time of this beginning-of-the-school year interview, she did not make clear in this description the value and potential impact of those things to her students, nor where education fit into the picture. This did not mean that she did not possess an ethic of care for her students’ well-being and social uplift, but it did suggest that she might have been needing more experiences at Eastside to develop the clarity of her intentions, and consequently her political perspectives deeper.

Like Mark, Heather also indicated that she wanted something from Eastside – “needing folks to help me build and learn.” This recognition humanized herself as not merely a producer, but as an intellectually engaged consumer, or more specifically, a learner. She recognized Eastside and likely its teaching community, as being an asset, as something with value from which she could benefit. Unlike Mark’s reflection, however, Heather also articulated her desire
to contribute to the goals of Eastside. Her ability to articulate this was revealing of her political perspective as being centered on contributing to community transformation, while also having the humility to humanize and learn from the community.

One way that Eastside structurally helped teachers to “build and learn” as critically conscious practitioners was through Critical Inquiry Groups. This structure in itself provided the humanizing conditions for teachers to be intellectually engaged and reflective. At Eastside, new teachers were part of their own Critical Inquiry Group in order to focus on their needs. Such a targeted structure indicated the way that Eastside not only valued teacher growth, but specifically new teacher growth. Heather, Mark, and Tran were all part of the new teacher Critical Inquiry Group. In Heather’s beginning-of-the-school year interview, she shared how the structure of the “first year teacher group” supported her needs and growth,

And our first year teacher group has been helpful too. It's like what are some similar struggles? A lot of us saw that our lack of structures and routines got in the way of our teaching of content. There's something about this school that definitely makes it demanding. You're not the only teacher that has relevant stuff going on in the classroom, so that's not what your relationship is going to rest on. It's not like 'you're that teacher that talks about real stuff in the class, so you're cool.' Even though it's not about being cool. I feel like at Eastside that's a given. So in our first year teacher group, we had to explore some structures or frameworks we could incorporate in our teaching, because I started to incorporate some structures, routines in my classroom but I think I was struggling to figure those out. I do want structure and routine in my classroom. Of course I want that cohesion, but what was that gonna look like? And having the space for people to be like, why don't you try this? Pick one thing and try it for a week and see if you like, and that's been really great. (10/5/14)

Heather demonstrated her reflexivity as a reflective practitioner within the humanizing, consciousness raising, and intellectually engaging space of the Critical Inquiry Group. Heather’s reflection indicated that there was a culture of building critical consciousness already in the school. Such a culture made it more demanding for new teachers like her to have strong pedagogy for students in order to access the content she was teaching. She implied that merely
bringing up something “relevant” or “real” was not enough to engage students. In order for her to develop as a critically conscious practitioner who possessed an authentic ethic of care that built the conditions to expect nothing less than greatness from her students, she had to be intellectually engaged in learning some basic things about classroom cohesion.

Heather’s discussion challenged those of us in teacher development to question if the focus is only on teaching, then where were the opportunities for teachers to authentically learn and understand? How could the process of teacher development make it more likely, by design, that teachers really understood what they were asked to do? This first year teacher group that Heather discussed provided teachers like her at Eastside with the opportunities to understand what they were asked to do in a way that was contextual and adapted for them as novice teachers. It was uncommon for a new teacher to get her first teaching job and be excited about teaching “for social justice,” only to be thwarted in the endeavor by her very own students. Because there could be a number reasons for this, Eastside wanted to create a space to problematize such challenges. Eastside did so in a way that not only built the crew through carving out an intentional and responsive learning space, they did so to also build the community of crew amongst the new teachers. Again, this reflected how Eastside placed value on the development of new teachers by designing within the school structure a way to help support and catalyze their growth. Growth could not be left to chance. It had to be structurally designed into the framework of the school.

The implication of having a responsive learning space meant that learning had to be built from where the learner currently was. During Mark’s beginning-of-the-school year interview, he revealed a particular purpose for working in the Eastside community that was not necessarily congruent with the other teachers in this study,
You [to me, the interviewer] were one of the reasons I wanted to come here. I wanted to be in a community where people would push me in the direction and ways that I couldn't push myself. There's not very many schools where I could be working with predominantly people of color. There's not many schools where I could be working almost exclusively students of color. And that's just an area where I don't have much experience in. I don't have much knowledge about. So I want to know about that.

(Beginning-of-the-school year interview, 10/2/14)

Mark’s articulation reflected his current emerging political perspective about why he chose Eastside and its students. His comments did not reflect an ethic of care that was built upon a commitment to students’ lives, the welfare of the community, and confronting inequitable and undemocratic social structures as part of their schooling. At this point in his career, Mark’s political perspective did not reflect an ethic of caring that was centered on the students. Mark appeared to be centered on himself and what he could gain, rather than what he could provide. He did not articulate a concern for the political implication of his work to students, but rather an implication for how his work could be “pushed” or rather, how he could be challenged in a way to become better. While this exploitive nature is problematic, it did not seem ill willed towards the community. It did not seem to view the community as pathological or him as some type of savior. The contrary was quite the case. The community was seen as having some form of asset that interested Mark. This perspective left room for him to grow within the school’s structure and culture, because that was what we sought.

Mark’s testimony clearly did not reflect the same types of motivation that Tran’s or Heather’s did, but did that mean that he would be less effective? Did that mean that he was politically misaligned? Or perhaps this signified that his political perspective required more movement, more guidance to be in alignment with the school and teachers like Tran? If so, then what was the role of the school’s structures and culture in mediating that process? Would Mark be seen as a teacher who was out of alignment with the Eastside and then marginalized within
the school community? Or would the recognition of his current political perspectives influence how the cultural and structural conditions of the school met his needs in order to catalyze the kind of growth that Eastside needed? How would a humanizing, intellectually engaging, and reflective practice develop Mark’s critical consciousness?

In his beginning-of-the-school year interview, Mark recognized that he was in the early stages of developing his political perspectives of being a critically conscious practitioner in how he revealed his attraction to the possibility of political alignment with the school and other teachers. In the excerpt below, Mark revealed that he may not yet be in solid alignment, but he hoped he might through evolving his practice through experience and time,

Seeing a group of people that was doing awesome teaching that was culturally responsive, that was getting, in some ways revolutionary or pushing boundaries, it's like cool. I want to be a part of that. I don't know if I can fit in there, but I definitely want to try it out. (Beginning-of-the-school year interview, 10/2/14).

Mark seemed to be inspired by an idea – perhaps the idea of the school, the idea of what the school guided teachers to do, and what the teachers actually seemed to be doing. At this beginning-of-the-year interview, Mark’s clarity of how he aligned with the school and teachers was more like an aspiration of alignment. This was not bad. This was hopeful. He may not have had clear enough political perspectives that helped him understand and motivate his work to the degree that some of the other participants did at this point in time, but the cultural and structural influences at the school seemed enough to inspire and influence his process of deepening his political perspectives in a direction aligned to Eastside. It was not whatever with Mark in terms of how the school and its teachers perceived his potential growth. The values of the school indicated that there was belief in the expansive power and potential of teachers, even
if they were still significantly emerging in their political perspectives and practices as critically conscious practitioners.

In the case of Mark, the conditions of the school seemed robust enough to create the culture for teachers to not only grow in their critical consciousness, but to accept the idea that growth was normal, expected, and needed to be guided through an interconnected process that was humanizing, intellectually engaging, and reflective. The possibility of becoming more politically and pedagogically aligned with the school and other teachers seemed to influence Mark who was significantly emerging in his perspectives. In another school, it might not have been that way. It might in fact have been *whatever* with teachers like Mark. He might have been seen as static and incapable of shifting in perspective. Or perhaps, another school with less than half of its teachers who were politically aligned could make any movement towards cohesion with the entire staff greatly difficult, if not inconceivable. Even if the school did have at least half of its teachers who were politically aligned, if the school as an institution was not structurally and culturally instrumental in creating the conditions for that to happen, then the lack of intentionality could likely lead towards unintentional results.

In the case of Mark, his end-of-the-year interview revealed an increase in his critical consciousness. In the excerpt below, he discussed his perspective on his purpose as a science teacher,

I would say that a lot of the ways that I think that the world is controlled is how people are misinformed. They’re misinformed or they’re not given access to information, information being inaccessible to them. I see science as a way to give people access to information whether they use that information or not or information is there to be accessed and making it accessible for everyone is I think a political act and one that I hope I’m taking by being a teacher. I think that if you lower expectations for students like when they turn things in, as well as their understanding and things like that, then you keep information inaccessible because you haven’t said, “You need this tool to be able to access this information.” So if you have a higher bar, you help the students to cultivate themselves to increase their accessibility to knowledge. The point of teaching for me
isn’t to delve information into the students, it’s to have the students be able access more information and develop the tools within themselves and to go and find the information that they need in their future. I guess in some way I find that to be politically relevant. I think just in teaching day to day you realize how much of teaching is absolutely nothing to do with what you’re teaching and how your teaching has everything to do with the entire world around you. They hopefully see physics in their lives in all these different ways but also there’s also how life impacts physics. That means that I teach content to understand the universe. I grab anything in the universe and figure out what physics has to do with that. I can ask the students what are the things that they’re curious about or bring in some curious things for them to be curious about and then figure out the physics in those together which is like a bigger thing to play with, right? But I would say it’s from being asked like, “what’s the point” by staff and by students and so you internalize that question of what’s the point. (6/1/15)

Overall, Mark’s evolution of his critical consciousness was shown in two main ways through this reflection: 1) how he understood the inequitable conditions of schooling and 2) what he taught and expected from students. Although he was unable to articulate the value of accessing certain information or the significance of making certain knowledge inaccessible to certain people, Mark understood that this systemically occurred in society and more specifically in schooling. He recognized education as a political act and not a neutral endeavor of depositing facts into heads. Such an analysis of schooling enabled him, as an intellectually engaged and reflective practitioner, to examine how he may have previously contributed to this inequity, which in turn provoked him to work towards countering it.

Mark indicated that having lower expectations of students was one way to reproduce inequitable schooling. Earlier in his end-of-the-school year interview (not included above), Mark reflected that one of his areas of growth was in being able to set and maintain higher expectations for his students. He revealed that earlier in the year, he was not as rigorous and allowed certain behaviors to occur. At some point in the school year, he realized that allowing for those lowered expectations positioned him to replicate schooling experiences that his students likely faced before. He consequently learned that he must be able to address the question,
“what’s the point.” Being able to do this, Mark learned that he had to share power with his students in order for them to be more active in critical engagement with physics and science overall as it related to their lives.

The process of developing as a critically conscious practitioner was interconnected with those of becoming humanizing, intellectually engaging, and reflective ones. While Tran was not highlighted in this section on building critically conscious practitioners, she was in fact discussed in these ways in the section on humanizing practitioners. She was also continuing to be discussed in upcoming sections in ways that circle back to all the categories of practitioners that Eastside sought to develop within its teachers.

Intellectually Engaged Practitioners

In addition to cultivating the conditions to develop humanizing, critically conscious, and reflective practitioners, a design such as the new teacher Critical Inquiry Group also indicated that there were intentional considerations to support teachers through intellectual engagement. As a school, Eastside created a “restorative praxis” model that was centered on learning and repairing relational damage instead of following traditional “discipline” practices that were centered on punishment. While whole school professional development meetings provided some amount of support and norming to teachers, the new teacher Critical Inquiry Group provided more contextualized assistance. The idea of restorative praxis was new to many of the new teachers, so extra support had to be provided to help them understand it more deeply, but also in a way where they were held accountable to practicing the process in their class. In Heather’s end-of-the-school year interview, she elaborated how being intellectually engaged with the restorative praxis model during the new teacher Critical Inquiry Group helped her teaching practice,
I think having the restorative praxis was really helpful. I know it’s a process of figuring out what exactly that looks like, but definitely the theory of restorative justice and structure of mediation basically. Just having an expectation that there can and will be a conversation about agreements where different parties will be listened to and be able to tell their experience and that being steered to make agreements. Not like just talking about, but we are going to figure this out. Kinda like a funnel. Or a pinball game. I don’t know, “It’s like you’ll go here, you’ll go there. If it doesn’t work, then you’ll be here. We’re going to sit down and have a conversation. Either it’ll be us or someone else there, and this is how it’s gonna happen, and we’re going to have continued meetings to see how it’s going, and see if that’s working for different people.” So I think that was helpful to learn in a more intentional way rather than just expecting us to do it perfectly just because it’s the policy. Then because we had to practice it and report back, I think that in order to get to that point where agreements could be made, sometimes a lot of experience goes into that. Like “this is what I see working or not working. Maybe it’s coming from this place, this personal place that’s different for each person. And what are some things we can do to address that?” Coming towards some resolution where there’s more agency. It’s not just subconscious like, ‘Here’s my reaction to something. Like here is my goal. Like here’s where I’m coming from and here are some ways I’m going to try to navigate myself to some place where I want to go.’ But yeah, it’s hard for kids to figure out sometimes, you know? I didn’t know what was going on with me when I was 16. There was lots of stuff. Sometimes people don’t’ want to think about the hard stuff that they’ve gone through. But at least having that structure where here’s the space that we’re going to create, and it’s gonna be respectful, and if it doesn’t work the first time, we’re going to keep doing it again. (6/1/15)

While this segment of data did seem long, it effectively demonstrated the layered ways that Heather developed as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioner. Central to Heather’s discussion was her ability to articulate the restorative praxis model and its purpose, as well as her reflection of her challenges to following it. She spent the first half of this excerpt attempting to narrate how the process worked in theory and the second half reflecting on how it worked for her in reality. Her identification of the theory of restorative justice and learning about the more specific restorative praxis indicated that she was intellectually engaged as a practitioner to learn both the theories as well as how the practice manifested in the school. Her articulation of the restorative praxis was developmentally appropriate for a novice teacher in the way she focused on attempting to discussed the process and connecting it to a pinball game. Such an analogy was not entirely incorrect, but it certainly
was insufficient in that it was not coupled with a deeper explanation of the purposes or reasons for such procedural steps. Again, we see the preoccupation with the concrete and the practical coming from one of the novice teachers. Remaining in such a phase is detrimental for novice teachers, because they risk evolving into a technocrat unable to apply principles in a variety of situations. Central to mitigating this risk was how the school facilitated teachers to continually learn and reflect over time.

In the second half of her testimony, Heather revealed promise in how she began to reflect more deeply in the restorative praxis in actual practice. As a reflective practitioner, she identified that gaining more experience would equip her with better adjusting to a variety of situations. She narrated a simulated conversation with a student when she said, “This is what I see working or not working. Maybe it’s coming from this place, this personal place that’s different for each person. And what are some things we can do to address that?” Her line of thinking suggested that she was beginning to understand that the restorative praxis was not a series of steps to simply follow, but rather a process of problematizing a situation and having some general directions of how to proceed. As a humanizing practitioner, Heather also realized how the model was intended to provide an equitable and humanizing environment for both student and teacher in solving conflict. As a critically conscious practitioner, she reflected that the model was not about reaction, but about agency and working together to solve a problem.

While her description of her experience with the Critical Inquiry Group or restorative praxis was intellectually engaging in how it helped her understand more deeply how to improve her practices, she also shared her challenges with how Eastside was still trying to figure out how to be responsive to the needs of individuals, especially novice teachers. As a critical and reflective practitioner, Heather humanized herself to reveal that despite the new teacher support
group, being a new teacher was still difficult and there could still be more considerations built into the design.

And it’s hard to be a part of that process ‘cause it’s like you’re in the dark and you’re surrounded by this electric fence and you don’t know where it is until you hit it. And that’s painful, you know. That was a real difficult process. It would’ve been cool to have someone like “ok, here are some lights that tell you where those fences are. Even though you’re fumbling in the dark, just don’t go there. Or try to do this. Or there’s a pothole.

(End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

What was of importance here was the reality that there were likely an infinite number of situations that could occur with teachers. Heather implied that perhaps there was a way to alert new teachers to some of the more likely scenarios that could occur, and then provide some strategies for how to navigate those. Such thinking is not uncommon, especially for novice teachers. They are predominantly concerned with what and how to do most things. They are focused on the practical and concrete. In many ways, this condition has been dramatically influenced by the system of schooling, which has prescribed numerous things for teachers to the point where teachers have gotten dependent on being told exactly what to do and exactly how to do it. Such preoccupation in the technocratic approach leads to the deskilling, deintellectualizing, and devaluing of teachers, which ultimately reduces teacher autonomy and creativity.

The preceding analyses of Heather, along with Tran and Mark in the subsections of Humanizing and Critically Conscious practitioners indicated how the four categories of Eastside’s teacher development worked in layered and interconnected ways to cultivate the conditions to counter such a prevalent state in schooling. Even though Tran and Mark were not invoked in this subsection on the Intellectually Engaged Practitioner, I did not mean to suggest that there was no data to substantiate their development in this area. Eastside’s attempt to develop teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners indicated the process was complex, yet interrelated. Findings on Tran’s and
Mark’s development as intellectually engaged practitioners were in fact discussed in earlier subsections and will continue to be discussed in the next subsection on the Reflective Practitioner.

The analyses conducted thus far on Tran, Mark, and Heather revealed an important consideration. If being a novice teacher was often a painful, difficult process, was there some amount of predictability in that process that the architecture of the school could intentionally address? If so, could something be structurally designed to at least identify those areas of high leverage that could more systematically address those potential issues? What would the school need to do to couple their practice of developing intellectually engaged practitioners with something that could better support the possibility of the pain they might experience?

*Reflective Practitioners*

Becoming a reflective practitioner weaved in all the other elements of what Eastside desired to develop in its teachers. Teachers reflected upon what it meant to be a humanizing practitioner to students as well as to each other. They reflected about what it meant to be critically conscious and how to develop critically conscious students. They reflected upon how their intellectual engagement influenced their practices. The conditions to become reflective practitioners in these ways were often manifested in Eastside’s cultural production of the crew. It was shown through the data that teachers who humanized each other and built community with each other could support each other, push each other’s growth, and hold each other accountable.

Tran demonstrated this in a January 28 journal reflection where reflected upon her most recent Critical Inquiry Group “homework.” She shared,

PLC’s homework went really well! I LOVED THE ACTIVITY, I will continue to do this, especially during block periods. Students had the opportunity to interact with each other. I had one of the other teachers in our PLC come into my class to record how much time I talked compared to how much students got to talk. He said that I talked for 15 minutes,
including small talks. It revealed to me that students love talking and learning from one another, they love interactive activities. I should talk less, choose my words wisely so I don’t repeat the same thing over and over again. (1/28/15)

As a reflective practitioner, Tran activated her intellectual engagement in the Critical Inquiry Group, or “PLC” (professional learning community), into her classroom. She did not treat the “PLC homework” as an intellectual endeavor that was disconnected from practical application and relevance to her students. She took her identity as an intellectually engaged teacher seriously and deepened her understanding of her learning through her reflexivity, or being a reflective practitioner. Her reflexivity with implementing the homework into her practice indicated how she was illuminated with the balance between teacher talk and student talk. As a reflective practitioner, she took her intellectually engaged learning from the Critical Inquiry Group, employed it into her class, reviewed the data that she collected, and reflected upon how she should adjust her future practice.

Tran continued to demonstrate her experiences in developing as a reflective practitioner in her end-of-the-school year interview. In the following excerpt, Tran provided an example of how becoming a reflective practitioner involved the crew helping her not only know where she needed to improve, especially as a first year teacher, but also where she was been doing things well.

I feel like a positive feedback also helps a lot like “Oh, you know what, I am doing what I’m supposed to be doing.” Or like “Oh, these are the things I can move forward. Oh I’m doing well on that.” So I feel like that’s also a plus. I feel like for a brand new teacher, we all sometimes get criticized on like “Oh, those brand new teachers don’t know what they’re doing,” but I feel like to build a strong foundation for our school, I feel like we really need to – besides the support that we need, we also need positive feedback too. (6/1/15)
Drawing attention to and validating where a practice was done well would help any teacher develop the kind of awareness that built intentionality and clarity. It additionally would assist in the process of building confidence. Prioritizing the validation of and building from assets countered the discourse of more dysfunctional schooling environments where there is a preoccupation on expecting that new teachers would not be effective in the classroom. Such a discourse that expected new teachers to be ineffective would limit their potential. Tran clearly indicated that she is aware of the perception of new teachers being ineffective in the classroom. She identified that the often held view of new teachers was that they had little skill and knowledge associated with their teaching. It was not clear if she held that perception because of her experiences at Eastside. Nonetheless, having such a perception and then manifesting those views in daily interaction would do little to help catalyze growth and build confidence. Tran seemed to believe that the success of brand new teachers helped to “build a strong foundation for our school.” She asserted that part of the conditions to do that was to help new teachers also know what they are doing well. As crew, she realized that she had value and importance in the school. She realized that she also needed to improve, but feel good about the process of improving, which could be nurtured through receiving “positive feedback too.” Tran implied that becoming a reflective practitioner required vulnerability and humility, but it did not have to require being constantly hyper critical to the point of only reflecting from feedback about challenges that needed improvement.

Receiving feedback about needing to improve what was not going well was still an important part of the process of becoming a reflective practitioner. Eastside seemed to be attentive to the conditions that allowed such feedback to occur in a humanizing and warm demanding way. The school desired to have teachers and students be able to feel safe and
comfortable enough with each other to hold each other accountable. Eastside also desired to have teachers feel comfortable with feeling uncomfortable. That is, the school wanted teachers to not avoid uncomfortable situations, such as in receiving difficult feedback for areas of improvement. Eastside wanted to build a culture where teachers believed that receiving feedback was necessary for growth and for self-actualization into their best selves.

Heather demonstrated her journey as a reflective practitioner in her journal when she revealed an experience about talking with some students in her Advisory during a retreat. In this February 27 entry, she demonstrated reflexivity as a result of the feedback that her advisees gave her.

This week the subject of relationships has come up a lot. Actually for the past couple of weeks. This has been happening steadily through some deep conversations with students – outside of the classroom – as well as through getting direct feedback from the kids. Students have given me a whole lot of advice in the past week about relationship building: 1) asking about students and their interests 2) giving positive feedback/ acknowledgement. I realized that sometimes I am so wrapped up in thinking about doing “what’s next” that I forget about the human relationship part of teaching. I wonder if there is a way to build in outside of class interaction time. (2/27/15)

From her entry, we do not know how much of the conversations about relationships were initiated by her, but we could tell she was reflexive as a result of receiving advice. Her realization that she sometimes forgot about the “human relationship part of teaching” prompted her to think about what she could do in order to change behavior. Her considering of this human relationship part of teaching in the first place was also likely influenced by Eastside’s focus on developing humanizing practitioners. It also revealed her ethic of care in remembering that her initial drive to become a teacher in the Eastside community in the first place was centered upon building meaningful relationships. Somewhere during the struggle of the school year, Heather indicated that she forgot about the importance of relationship building. A superficial ethic of
care would likely result in a teacher not being open to examining her contradictions. Yet, this journal entry suggested that Heather was facing hers. In her end-of-the-school year interview, we can infer in the passage below how Heather faced her contradictions and took her students’ advice seriously,

I do feel more competent as a teacher. I think that knowing just very clearly what a classroom culture, well what I want a classroom culture to feel like, just with expectations and boundaries. The students really tested that a lot this year and I hadn’t really experienced that at all in my teaching afterschool and even in student teaching to the degree that I did. And so there were times were it was like…it’s not just about compliance, but about how the room feels. Is this a space where people where everybody feels safe and appropriately held to high expectations? (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

Heather indicated that she felt more competent. She appeared to have spent time focusing on classroom culture more than what she did in the beginning of the school year. She gained the perspective of forefronting questions that considered how her students were feeling. It was possible that much of her turning point was when she started to listen to the advice of her students and perhaps even from colleagues such as Eric, her department lead. Heather continued to detail her process of using her reflexivity towards making some behavioral changes in the excerpt below from her end-of-the-school year interview,

And there were times where it was compliance and I felt that, you know, a heaviness in the classroom. Maybe students are acting from a place of fear right now. You know what I mean, like, consequences, you know, versus like when the classroom felt cohesively, I don’t know, closer to my ideal of what I wanted where students were acting from a space of where they had some agency in their actions and where they also felt good about where they were coming from as far as their own actions and taking responsibility for it, you know? (6/1/15)

Heather was able to articulate some of the components of classroom cohesion when she discussed students having agency in their actions and feeling good about and being responsible for their actions. This precision in articulation assisted in developing her emerging political perspectives. She did not have the language at the beginning of the year to articulate classroom
cohesion in this way, and her experiences, coupled with knowledge, reflection, and critical and non judgmental dialog assisted in her evolving process. In particular, the excerpt below revealed how Heather continued to illustrate how critical dialog with others was difficult, yet was instrumental in her progress,

I think that with building classroom culture, I think that having conversations with others, so of which was really hard with some staff here. It was like “ok, this is what’s going on in your classroom.” And people, a lot of people, everybody else, knew the students better than I did, so they were able to be like, “you know, here are reasonable expectations for what can be expected of the student.” And trying to piece together like the students’ narrative and also other people’s narrative, you know just like those other perspectives and having a better idea of where I should be coming from and how I should approach things. And having some real conversations with people that are like “who are those students who are being given referrals and when does that happen and why?” Trying to troubleshoot that cuz I think definitely in the classroom it can be hard to take that step back. So ya, I think that having those conversations whether or not I was reaching out to people or people were telling me “this is what I’m noticing” was really helpful. I probably could have used more, a lot more, like twice as much of that. (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15).

Heather’s reflection revealed that she worked in an environment where she felt safe and supported enough to have difficult conversations about her teaching. They were rooted in the need for her to improve in ways that better attended to the needs of her students. She was provided some data that highlighted a pattern of who was receiving referrals, which likely resulted in a conversation that illuminated how those students were not having their learning needs attended to. They were being removed from the learning all-together. Such framing, however, did not stop at just pointing out the situation. Heather and her colleagues problematized the situation towards developing some ways to consider her students more holistically and then respond appropriately. Heather’s capacity for reflexivity, coupled with the environment to maximize her capacity, allowed her to grow in political perspective as well as in practice. This in turn contributed towards her feelings of competence. Her conversations also
situated her experiences within a larger socio-historic condition of schooling where some students are disproportionately getting sent out of class and pipelined towards underachievement.

Similar to Heather, the process of developing reflective practitioners helped science teacher, Mark to gain an analysis of himself, his learning, and his transformation by engaging in discourses that challenged structures of power in society. In the excerpt from his end-of-the-school year interview below, Mark revealed how the conditions to develop humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged practitioners caused him to reflect upon his previous beliefs and behaviors influenced his development,

I would say some of the things I’ve had to rethink are around behavior norms. Like, if you turn in a Culture Referral, you need to say like why you sent that kid to the office, as opposed to like ,’I sent the kid to the office. I’m the teacher. You [i.e. some school administrator] yell at them. Send them back groveling. I’ll give them extra homework, and then we’ll like kick ‘em out of school for a couple of days,’ which is the way that it is in other schools, some other schools. And I think it causes you to rethink how you learned how certain behavior should be dealt with. I had to work through that. It makes you think about what you expect to happen when you like give a Culture Referral. Are you looking for punishment or are you needing help with mediating a conflict? What learning or community repair needs to happen? I used to think it was more about punishment, because that’s what I saw all around me. (6/1/15)

Before discussing Mark’s reflection, let me first provide background knowledge on a “Culture Referral” so as to understand the context of his discussion. According to the Eastside Crew handbook, a Culture Referral is

…not a punishment. It is a consequence based on the principle that when a violation of the central values (i.e. Warrior Intellectual Codes of Respect) occurs, that there must be an educational & restorative process by which the person(s) who did the violation must go through a process in order to reflect and gain insight as to how to restore value in and of the space we call Eastside (2015).

The explicitly stated definition of the culture referral in itself could provoke cognitive dissonance in how individuals, such as Mark, view “discipline.” At Eastside, discipline was not viewed as punishment that resulted in students being removed from the opportunity to learn. This
description of a Cultural Referral made clear right away that what was happening was “not a punishment.” Since this reframing was unlike what happened in traditional schools, one might be at tension in examining one’s ideology and practices in order to make sense of this new knowledge and move towards any compelling change. Mark’s discussion about his use of the Culture Referral implied that he experienced cognitive dissonance in his process of learning how to use it. He had to “rethink” what he once believed (and expected from writing a “referral”) and “work through” any dissonance he might have felt. His use of naturalized axioms in his make-believe situation where he narrated sending a “kid to the office” not only revealed his previous ideological beliefs about how to manage behavior norms, it might have actually been based on a real conversation between him and a school leader. Such a conversation might have been based on where a school leader receiving a student who given a Culture Referral, later dialogued with Mark to problematize why the student was removed from the learning process by being sent out of class with a referral. Through his process of more deeply understanding the nature of the Culture Referral, Mark also obtained the language and corresponding critical theories that helped with his evolving political perspectives. He talked about “mediating conflict” and “community repair,” which equipped him with new tools to continue on his sense-making journey to become politically and pedagogically aligned with Eastside. He also was reflexive in realizing how he might have unintentionally reproduced the inequitable conditions of schooling when he revealed what he used to think, which was based on the paradigm of punishment.

Mark’s reflection about Culture Referrals indicated that the conditions that worked to develop reflective practitioners pushed him in a positive direction. The make-believe conversation that Mark might have had with a school leader likely interrogated him to the point of having him examine why he believed what he believed and what he truly desired from sending
a student out of class. This process might have caused a painful revelation, because it likely revealed that Mark was replicating conditions that he sought out to counter when he became a teacher. His process of developing as a reflective practitioner also laid out foundation for how he could continually examine his beliefs and corresponding behaviors, with or without the assistance of others.

The findings from this chapter indicated that Eastside’s mission to develop teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners was an interrelated and layered process that was embedded within both the cultural and structural conditions of the school. These findings indicated that each of these categories informed and influenced the development of the other. The humanizing and critically conscious practitioners were interconnected in their ethic of care and risk for students and colleagues towards not only achieving academic or professional greatness, but also in engaging in the psychological and political process necessary to navigate an oppressive society. The intellectually engaged and reflective practitioners worked hand-in-hand to cultivate competent educators who were humanizing and critically conscious. The findings also indicated that the focal novice teachers of this study, Tran, Mark, and Heather, each demonstrated some unique responses to Eastside’s mission as well as some similarities, depending on their needs and where they started in the beginning of the school year. The findings also demonstrated that these teachers revealed growth when compared to their initial interviews that revealed their development as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners through their ability throughout the year to demonstrate deeper political perspectives in the way they articulated the rationales behind their thinking, practices, and greater aims.
This chapter laid out an examination that followed data analysis procedures from Phases two through four for the focal novice teachers in this research. The next chapter will perform a similar analysis by examining data in relation to the focal teacher leaders in this study. Following that chapter, I will begin my discussion of all my findings.
CHAPTER 6
Teacher Leaders Emerging as Politically Determined Pedagogues

As with the three novice educators, this study also found that the three teacher leaders developed as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners in conjunction with the cultural and structural supports of Eastside. Eric and Janelle were in their first year as department leaders of social studies and science respectively while Karla was a more seasoned leader of the English department. This chapter examined ways that the cultural and structural conditions at Eastside High influenced their development in these four categories as both classroom teachers as well as teacher leaders. As was the case with the novice teachers, the findings in this chapter indicated that development in one category affected and consequently further progressed growth in the other categories. Since progress in the categories were not mutually exclusive of each other, the findings revealed that discussion of the data from the participants could not be neatly contained in one, discrete category. The data often represented interconnected combinations of how the participants developed as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioners. Given this, the findings indicated that growth as a humanizing practitioner usually influenced growth as a critically conscious one. Demonstration as an intellectually engage practitioner required acting as a reflective practitioner. Acting in this capacity as an intellectually engaged and reflective practitioner influenced growth as humanizing and critically conscious ones. The findings also indicated that growth as a teacher leader was difficult, particularly as it related to supporting the growth of other teachers. Data sources used were beginning-of-the-school year interviews, participant narratives, field notes created from observations of teacher collaborations, end-of-school-year interviews, and memos.
created from one-on-one check in sessions, participant meetings, and/or interviews. Data analysis procedures from Phases two through four as described in Chapter Three were followed.

*Humanizing Practitioners*

The cultural and structural conditions at Eastside High facilitated the development of all three teachers and teacher leaders as humanizing practitioners as reflected in their pedagogy with students and through their interactions with colleagues. Both ways they developed required that teachers shared power in order to facilitate empowerment, agency, and active critical engagement. As such, when teachers at Eastside developed as humanizing practitioners, they also developed as critically conscious ones.

Although Eric was in his third year at Eastside High, he was in his first year as leader of the social studies department. In Eric’s beginning-of-the-school year interview, he discussed how his moral obligation led him towards realizing the importance of working in alignment and solidarity with his colleagues. In Eric’s beginning-of-the-school year interview he reflected,

> And I think what's cool at Eastside is that many of the teachers at Eastside are folks of color. We resemble the students. We come from neighborhoods like the ones the students live in today, if not we live in the same neighborhoods. And I think that we have a shared common struggle. We take the time to humanize ourselves and make sure that we spend time to give ourselves and have the time to laugh and smile and to breathe. It's authentic. We're not better than you. We don't claim to be better than you. But rather, we stand beside you. We are in the struggle hand in hand together. And that's really what keeps me going at the end of the day, 'cause this work is hard. It's isolating. Trying to keep a school like this alive is hard. We're working against the tide. (10/5/14)

Eric’s demonstration of being a humanizing practitioner was revealed in his clarity of alignment with other teachers and the ways that teachers shared power with students. Such a perspective was rooted in his critical consciousness about the nature of power in schooling. Embedded within his perspective was a critical understanding that sharing power was an essential part of struggling together in solidarity. This understanding also fueled the way he humanized his
fellow teachers and himself to be considered regular people who were similar to the students. Such a perspective positioned Eric in feeling part of something bigger than him. He used the word, “we” often, which represented his sense of solidarity and collective action towards the education provided to the children. This solidarity and collective action also seemed to be supportive to his own individual needs when he mentioned, “that’s really what keeps me going at the end of the day.” His articulation of how he conceived of humanizing others focused on building with others through knowledge of others. He did not describe the humanizing practitioner in how it might look on the daily level, including during times of difficulty and conflict. He, however, recognized that there was a spirit and culture of mutually supporting one another at Eastside that he valued. Otherwise, the isolation from working really hard in a way that was “against the tide” or rather towards a counterhegemonic conception of education, could potentially burn him out, especially if he did not feel aligned with his peers.

In actual practice, Eric sometimes showed impatience with his peers and co-principals. For instance, a one-on-one check in session with Eric in October revealed some concerns he had with the school’s current leadership and the school in general. My notes indicated that he listed off nine items of concern. Those items were the source of frustrations that caused him to feel that he needed to have those items addressed or at least understood further in order to decide if he would want to return as faculty the following year. Below was an excerpt of the analytical memo I made after our meeting,

Eric and I discussed at least 9 items that have obviously been causing him to be more and more frustrated with working at Eastside High. While those items are both structurally and culturally related, I believe that the root of the issues come down to three main things: 1) he works really hard for the school beyond his work in the classroom, and seems to feel like not enough people are doing the same, 2) he is making judgments of people based off his assumptions that never gets directly addressed, and 3) he seems to believe he is not valued enough to be able to be a part of actively and effectively helping to lead the school. This is a big deal, because Eric, who is still young, is such a talented
educator who has much potential. I see myself in him, in not just what he contributes to a space, but also in how he navigates challenges. I have come a long way, but I had to struggle greatly and got several bumps and scrapes along the way. I never had anyone to mentor me, especially in the ways that I am trying to consistently do for him now. I really think I need to allow him the space to feel the things he feels right now, but then dialog more critically next week. Because I know that he identifies with me and respects me as an educator, leader, and mentor, I think I will share a little about my personal journey and struggle with him next week in order to frame that if he doesn’t become more aware of where his feelings are coming from and what his role is in allowing them to get directly addressed, then he will quickly be on a path of moving from place to place. (10/17/14)

This memo revealed my interpretations of how Eric might have struggled with being a humanizing practitioner towards his colleagues during this time of the school year. He was frustrated and made judgments and assumptions that likely furthered his frustrations. During our meeting, he was not clear how he was going to deal with those frustrations. Second, this memo also demonstrated my commitment to Eric’s development as a teacher leader rather than simply evaluating his comments for purposes of meaning making in the research. This memo revealed how as a participant researcher, I too was engaged in the process of acting as a humanizing practitioner and working to develop humanizing practitioners. Evaluation and meaning making for this research was still happening, but the nature of this memo had a more relevant purpose – to consider how to nurture Eric’s leadership development. It provided me with a space to reflect upon my mentorship with Eric and how I would mediate his growth.

In the following check in session we had together, as the memo above indicated, I shared a personal anecdote about how I struggled with my contradictions of claiming to be a humanizing practitioner, but not always acting in humanizing ways towards colleagues during times of frustration. Through this anecdote and the discussion that followed, Eric demonstrated his ability to act as a reflective practitioner to build critical consciousness about some of his tendencies and consider how to adjust his behavior and thinking. Throughout the year, Eric.
showed signs of developing a more complex understanding of what it meant to work as a humanizing practitioner towards his peers. In the following excerpt from his journal, as if talking to me as “the big homie,” he reflected that he was learning. It was a “process” for him. Eric’s reflection suggested movement from when we last had our check in session. In his journal he reflected,

I feel like I’ve worked with a whole lot of different people and a lot of different places and institutions, and programs for a really long time. And so I think at Eastside, it’s definitely been a process of being more patient and being more understanding with folks but at the same time holding a hard line of what to expect, because we have seen things fall from an early test. What we’re trying to do is hard and I don’t think there’s a handbook for that. Yeah, there’ll be the big homies like you and other folks to help and guide us and give some advice and think from their experiences, but I think it’s something very unique at Eastside. (11/10/14)

When Eric highlighted that “we have seen things fall from an early test,” he referred to earlier years and experiences at Eastside when the cultural and structural conditions of the school were in their infancy and underdeveloped. He also indicated that there was no handbook for how to build school cohesion in the way that was aligned to Eastside’s vision, mission, and core values. The crew was at the core for assisting in the cultural process of building the crew in humanizing ways that required him to be “more patient and being more understanding with folks but at the same time holding a hard line of what to expect.” Eric spoke of a delicate balance, because the crew also had to be the ones to manifest the vision, mission, and core values. His reference to “holding a hard line” implied that some of his colleagues may have not always lived up to the expectations of the school in ways that were aligned to the vision, mission, and core values. At the same time, his reflection indicated that he recognized that the cultural and structural conditions at the school were unfinished and took constant work. Eric added in the same journal entry,
I feel like we’re pretty honest about what we’re struggling with both personally and professionally. I know we created a community that is pretty honest and I think even though we have a lot do and more growth that’s needed in terms of our curriculum and in terms of who we are as educators, I feel like we’ve created a solid foundation where we can be honest and open with each other, because I think oftentimes, especially as teachers in a school for social justice, you know, the foundation is critique and I think that’s hard for anybody. And I think it’s hard to not take it personally all we have to do, and I think it takes some really intentional community building to feel comfortable opening up and to feel comfortable getting critique. (11/10/14)

Eric illuminated the importance of being open, honest, and vulnerable about one’s struggles in order for the crew to nurture each other’s growth in humanizing ways. It could take a group a while to get to that place, which was clearly recognized by Eric when he said that there was intentionality around creating a “community” and “solid foundation,” which in turn helped people to feel comfortable enough to trust that others were there to not tear each other down, but rather support each other’s uplift. From these building blocks that Eric laid out, we start seeing the formation of his conception of the humanizing practitioner. That is, the humanizing practitioner worked with crew to unite the language of critique with the language of possibility at not only the broad level of economic, political, and social injustices in the world, but also within the microcosm of the classroom in the everyday interactions with students. In this light, the humanizing practitioner also acted as a critically conscious practitioner.

As an emerging leader, Eric was building upon his commitment to be a humanizing educator who held high expectations of himself, his students, and his colleagues. But like English department lead Karla, he did not receive any formal training or mentoring prior to the year of this research in leading adults and being responsible for their development. As this was certainly an example of a gap in Eastside’s intent to create an architecture of support to build teacher capacity, my work with novice like Karla, Eric, and Janelle was also an attempt to figure out how to best support them. In a January 8 journal entry, Eric discussed his concerns about
Heather, a first year history teacher in his department. As a new department lead, Eric faced some tensions about how he should mediate Heather’s growth. He reflected,

I definitely understand it being her first year. She is taking it day-by-day and just trying to stay afloat. She also shared with me that she had a close, personal friend who passed recently, so I didn't really want to give a lot of constructive feedback like I wanted to. It seemed she needed more of a space to let out her frustrations and emotions more than anything. I know that she is struggling with classroom cohesion in many of her classes. I hear students talking badly about her in the hallways, from teachers observing her, and from her own (but very few) confessions to me in our Department Meetings. I wish I could support her more but because our prep times are common, I don't have very much leeway with getting classes covered. And frankly, because I'm still fine-tuning my own units every day, I don't want to take valuable time away from me and my students.

(1/8/15)

In one sense, Eric demonstrated being a humanizing practitioner when he provided the space for Heather to talk during their department meeting time about her friend who recently passed away. Eric was intending to talk about some issues about her classroom cohesion, but he privileged Heather’s immediate emotional needs. Such a decision was in alignment with the school’s recognition that teachers, like students, have emotional needs too. Teachers were not seen as mere instruments of production. Eric recognized that and took the time to allow Heather the space to “let out her frustrations and emotions.” What would Eric do about what he originally wanted to discuss? How would the culture and structure of the school facilitate that?

On another level, Eric’s reflection could be considered an example of how he was not acting as a humanizing practitioner. Eric was under a structure (i.e. common prep times) where he could not observe Heather unless he got released from teaching his own students. At Eastside, while it was acceptable and even encouraged for a department lead to get released to perform classroom observations of his team, Eric revealed that he did not prefer it, because it would take him away from his own teaching. Having common prep times was a structure that promoted collaboration amongst teachers. At the same time, such a structure made it difficult for teachers
to observe each other if teachers had only one prep period. This did not necessarily mean that Eastside did not believe it was important for teachers to observe each other. It did not mean that this structure countered Eastside’s mission to develop humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. It did, however, mean that this particular structure made peer observations more difficult to do in that it required coordination and planning with other people ahead of time. The common prep structure may have been evidence of Eastside’s challenges to develop appropriate structures to meet many needs. That is, sometimes one structure that facilitated one intent (i.e. teacher collaboration) made another more challenging (i.e. peer observation) As an emerging leader, was Eric grappling with the tension of sharing his ethic of caring between his students and his teachers? Was he grappling more with navigating the school’s structures in conjunction with the many demands on him? Shifting his attention and focus to helping to support and develop his colleagues was an action he had not done before as a formal responsibility, and so it seemed reasonable that he had tensions with it given the limitations of the structure in which he operated. What seemed more important was not this isolated reflection, which again could be seen as evidence as to how Mark contradicted humanizing practices, but the compellation of data throughout the year that indicated how growth was catalyzed. We must continue to analyze what culturally and/or structurally happened within the school to contribute to his growth, no matter where he started.

For instance, after I read his journal entry during the school year, I knew that I had to interrogate his thinking in order to catalyze growth in him as a humanizing practitioner. Eric and I discussed the issue he wrote about our next one-on-one check in session. The reflective memo I created after our January 9 session indicated that I engaged him as a reflective practitioner to consider the ways that he was employing or not employing his ethics of care and risk towards his
colleagues. Through this process, Eric and I both agreed that it was for the sake of all the students and Heather as a first-year teacher that he start having more conversations with her about what he could directly see in her classroom versus what he heard was happening. We discussed when might be a good day for him to be released for at least one period to observe Heather. In our check in session, we talked through where he might design a lesson that was more of an independent or guided workshop than direct instruction, so that he could feel more comfortable about leaving one class of his students. I agreed to substitute for him so that he could be released to observe, which also gave him some comfort in not being there for his students for one period.

The combination of his reflexivity and this discussion with me put Eric in a position to consider concrete possibilities. As a reflective practitioner, he became aware of his preferences to not leave his class, while also being open to engage in non-judgmental dialog to work through his concerns in a practical way. This reflexive process challenged his identity as a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner. He was able to self-examine himself and develop awareness of possible contradictions in order to gain insight and adjust behavior. As part of a Mediative Learning Community, Eric was reminded of the need to be responsible for the learning and welfare of one of his teachers. As any complex human being with inherent contradictions, the process and culture of being a reflective practitioner provided the conditions where he could be reminded of his responsibility. Such an experience revealed his political perspective as a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner at the time, while also demonstrating his potential for growth.

By the end of the school year, Eric continued to struggle in the daily ways to act as a humanizing practitioner, but our check in sessions still gave us a space for him to act as a
reflective practitioner where we could interrogate his feelings, thoughts, and responses towards others. In his end-of-the-school year interview, he reflected how his political perspectives were pushed throughout the year. He shared,

I think every year, I’m finding more clarity around the idea of humanization and its part of the vision and mission at our school. To humanize one another is really difficult because we’re keeping the school alive. We’re pretty much a nonprofit and so everything we do, we got to do ourselves, right? There’s no district that supports Eastside, and so it’s hard in this institution. I mean, humanization works directly in antithesis to that. We asked ourselves to stop and to really be mindful of what we’re doing in the classrooms, outside of classrooms, how we talk to one another as students, how we talk to each other as adults, and then on top of that, we have our personal lives. So I think you know like for me, I still feel, even though it’s my 6th year in the classroom but relatively new to the space, I struggle with that. I struggle like the other day thinking like the conversation we had last with the teacher who was leaving and I was like “Why didn’t you tell our community earlier that he was gonna leaving and why is he waiting till the last week, right?” And you really push me to humanize him and to think and ask him like “Why?” (6/1/15)

In Eric’s reflection, he shared that humanizing his peers had sometimes been difficult. He revealed how I pushed his thinking during one of our check in sessions about one of his colleagues. In a June 5 analytic memo I wrote after the check in session in which he referred, I noted that I had to act as a warm demander in having a direct and sometimes difficult conversation in order to push ideological thought and deep introspection about his actions. At our check in session, Eric seemed to have some assumptions and judgments about another teacher, but had not had any direct conversations with that particular teacher on the subject. I pushed Eric in a warm demanding way to evaluate not only how and why he could make such assumptions and judgments about a teacher, but what the consequences of that would be. His trust with me allowed us to have a genuine and reflective conversation where he was not defensive. This conversation clearly also made an impact on him, because he continued to reflect upon what it meant to really humanize others – and not just in a way that allowed one to get to know another which was how he often described the practice earlier in the year, but when
we needed it the most—during conflict. His reflection at the end of the school year revealed that he made some growth in the area of becoming a humanizing practitioner. He admitted to struggling with humanizing others, particularly adults. His natural tendency was to make assumptions or judgments and get frustrated with others before understanding their perspectives. Through conversations with perhaps a respected and trusted “big homie” that provided the opportunity to interrogate his thoughts and behaviors in a humanizing, yet warm demanding way, he began to learn how to become more aware of himself more. He began to learn how to examine himself more. Such a practice moved Eric from conceiving of humanizing others as only about pedagogy, learning more about each other, or taking the time to take care of oneself. Through conditions that invoked him to be a reflective practitioner, he began to complexify his definition of becoming a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner to be one who also manifested an ethic of care and risk through daily interpersonal interactions, whether during moments of ease or difficulty.

This analysis of Eric drew attention to the fact that humans are complex beings of contradiction. The conditions of Eastside did not create that. The conditions did not seem to fuel that as well. However, the conditions provided ways to push the ways that Eric developed and acted as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner. The conditions contained his behaviors and actions in such a way that worked to guide him back to center when he started to diverge. This realization brought to light that developing as a humanizing teacher leader, particularly when it came to supporting the growth of others, could be difficult and required continual support.

Because this subsection exclusively focused on tracing part of Eric’s journey as a humanizing practitioner, I did not mean to suggest that the other participants did not develop in
these ways. This data on Eric that was collected throughout the year provided such an intricately weaved story that was provocative and warranted focused attention. Again, because the findings from this analysis showed that teachers developed in the four categories of teacher development in interrelated and layered ways, Karla and Janelle’s demonstration of being humanizing practitioners will be discussed in the subsections that follow.

**Critically Conscious Practitioners**

Similar to developing the humanizing practitioner, Eastside High also worked to develop its teacher leaders to become critically conscious practitioners in ways that authentically moved beyond its inspirational narratives and rhetoric. This section provides evidence to show how the daily moves of teacher leaders led to building a critical consciousness that reflected the acquisition of knowledge, not for knowledge’s sake, but for larger socio-political purposes. With notions of “social justice” pervading mainstream discourses in Northern California, and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area quite regularly, what did Eastside do to ensure that its educators were doing meaningful, developmental, authentic, daily work that aimed for lasting effects in the long run?

Karla, an English teacher and department lead, was in her fourth year at Eastside during this research. Out of all the focal participants in this study, she has been at Eastside the longest. She started as a Humanities teacher, which combined English and social studies in approximately a two-hour block of time. She worked in that capacity for two years, before I “de-cored” the Humanities into separate English and social studies classes. In her first two years at Eastside, she also took on some leadership responsibilities to coordinate a new structure we wanted to try called Critical Inquiry Groups. By her third year at Eastside, Karla took on the leadership role of
focused on leading English, while Eric began his first year as department lead for social studies.

In her beginning-of-the-school year interview, Karla revealed part of her political perspectives as a critically conscious practitioner when she discussed the “practice of freedom.” She reflected,

I can't teach of think of teaching in any other way. I can't think of teaching as something different or separate than the practice of freedom. Same as learning. I think it's important that anytime I think about what it is I'm going to teach and what I want students to learn that I think about what are the things I want young people to learn that'll bring them closer to freedom, both in terms of conceptually and also in terms of their skills. What do they need to survive? To thrive? To be able to navigate through different systems? To be able to kinda flip the script in some ways. I think about the people that I love and what I want to see for the people that I love, and I know it's not possible without the young people coming up. And the young people coming up are very much the people who I love. They look like my family in lots of ways. Now being at Eastside for several years, they are my family. I spend a lot more time with them than I do with my own family, so it's important to me to work with them to imagine and create what something different could look like. (10/2/14)

Her clarity of purpose drew attention to what it might mean to practice freedom — to survive, to thrive, to understand and navigate through societal systems, and to produce and live as a counter narrative. Unlike first year English teacher Tran, who mentioned education for liberation but did not elaborate much on what that meant to her, Karla did provide some explication. When she discussed the “practice of freedom,” she demonstrated how her revolutionary love played out in how she strived to prepare students as engaged citizens and social actors in academically and socially powerful ways when she discussed the practice of freedom. She highlighted her focus on knowledge building and skill building towards a revolutionary aesthetic of surviving, thriving, navigating, and then “flipping the script” in society. Such a focus revealed her ethic of care and risk for her students, while also demonstrating the ways in which she was a humanizing
practitioner. Again, the work and development of becoming a humanizing practitioner went hand-in-hand with becoming a critically conscious one.

Karla also demonstrated how she was a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner in the way that she revealed her ethic of care and revolutionary love when she described the young people as “family” and the “people who I love.” She did not romanticize love as a feeling that was possessed. She connected it with action in the way she stressed the importance of working with these people whom she loved in order to “imagine and create what something different could look like.” Karla’s political perspectives as a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner centered upon an endeavor and ultimate goal that sought to socially uplift the lives of her students towards their self-actualization.

When probed to highlight what she considered in prompting the youth to imagine and create what something different could look like, Karla responded with notions consistent with theories of culturally relevant pedagogy. She described,

I think about what is currently going on that is important in terms of what should kids know and study, what is appealing and what kids care about at the time, but also important in terms of what can help kids move closer to freedom. What are the issues that can help students understand concepts that will help them make sense of their everyday experiences and what they live that can help them move closer to freedom. Together with what kind of skills do they need to develop and how do those skills overlap with content standards and learning targets that we have set. (Beginning-of-the-school year interview, 10/2/14)

Her responses clearly demonstrated a fundamental understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. She indicated her not only her ethic of care, but also her intellectual engagement when she highlighted that she wanted students to build their critical consciousness, perform well with academically rigorous work, and develop cultural competence towards their self-actualization. Implicit in her reflection was a recognition of the socio-historical conditions that students might have faced on the daily that might limit their journey towards this idealized notion of “freedom.”
Karla’s comments began to illustrate how intellectually engaged practitioners informed the ways that humanizing and critically conscious practitioners understood the nature of their task. In her description, however, Karla did not yet discuss the complexity of such an endeavor. There was no mention of the challenges or impediments associated with doing such work with her population of students. She did not discuss how the critically conscious practitioner still worked within a complex context and institutionalized system that often sought to de-intellectualize both students and teachers. How would such complexities influence her work and thinking?

Karla began to describe such complexities as she reflected throughout the school year in her journal. In a December 28 entry, she demonstrated her work as a reflective practitioner when she narrated more intimately her work ethic and political perspectives behind it. She revealed,

I have never worked as hard or as many hours as I do at Eastside, so there must be something special about being here. The simple answer is that the reason I work so hard and so much at Eastside is because of our students. Both the students who sit in my classroom and walk down the halls, and the students whom they represent. Because the truth is that students in this neighborhood and town are no different from students in Pittsburg, South Central, or Watts – the other communities I’ve called home. They’re no different from me. Our students deserve to have the absolute best teachers. They deserve to have people who have their backs – intellectually, institutionally, but also personally, socially, and mentally. And that’s hella hard work. I’m not yet the best, so I have to work even harder to make up for that. That’s the simple answer.

The real answer that the Nice White Lady movies never show us is that teaching is just plain hard work, even if you’re not trying to be the best.

Developing curriculum from scratch that is not only meaningfully grounded in students’ lived realities, what’s going on in the world, will teach them how to better survive and thrive in the world, and moves them closer to freedom, while simultaneously building basic skills and developing grade-level ones in ways that ain’t about rote memorization and don’t drill and kill, is TIME-CONSUMING. Even learning how to do this takes a long time. After 9 years, I’m still getting the hang of it. But it’s what our young people deserve. And fortunately, it’s what Eastside values. That’s why I work – planning, coaching, teaching – the way I do at Eastside.

(Karla’s Journal, 12/28/14, emphasis in original)
Karla indicated that she was still motivated by facilitating students to move closer to freedom, but her reflection also revealed that the process was not easy. She had been doing it for nine years, and was “still getting the hang of it.” In this short journal entry, she stressed the difficulty of her endeavor seven times. Perhaps because of the school and/or perhaps because of the students, Karla was committed to work hard regardless of how hard or how long it took. Her reasons for her motivation to move students closer to freedom were somewhat explained, but likely implied a deeper meaning. She indicated, “our young people deserve” the kind of education and support she described. She stressed that her students deserved the “best” teachers who possessed an ethic of care that had their “backs.” This focus and concern for students indicated Karla’s commitment as a critically conscious as well as humanizing practitioner.

Embedded in her commitment was a critical understanding of the unjust and inequitable structure of schooling in how it served students like hers. In her commitment, it was also implied that she believed in the expansive potential of students and journey towards becoming more fully human.

By the end of the school year, Karla complicated the notion of the “hard work” to be more than just about being “time-consuming.” Karla’s end-of-the-school year interview provided opportunities to problematize this process of bringing students closer to freedom that she mentioned multiple times. In the discussion below, Karla still maintained the spirit of what she articulated in the beginning and middle of the year, but now she included a deeper inquiry of her purpose as well as a realization of what kind of effectiveness she was intent of achieving. She revealed,

I grapple now teaching seniors and I think this is my second year of teaching seniors. Political relevance, you know which is essential to why I teach and where I teach, especially in the second semester, no, all year long. It’s something you know that we focused on and making sure that we’re intentional about or even learning this at Eastside for four years now but it’s important like “Oh don’t leave this after you graduate, make sure that you still being community focused that you’re still studying, or that you’re still
politically engaged and that doesn’t mean electoral politics, it means something else. But I think graduation comes and how many of our students continue being critically engaged in that way. You know, how many of our students continue to study, to critically study. How real was a lot of stuff for our students? How many more students internalized the theories or was it just some stuff that they had to do for school? How well of a job did we do of how things students internalize it, because if we just taught it and graded them for it, it’s not politically relevant, it’s some stuff. So that’s something I’m grappling with is how do we make this real? How do we make this not a school thing, not an Eastside thing, but a life thing? Because that’s what we need. You know, nothing’s going to change if it don’t become internalized. (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

This example of Karla acting as a reflective practitioner was still consistent with the notion of revolutionary love that she demonstrated earlier in the year. However, this narration revealed a deeper concern – how did political relevance become something more? The question of whether “relevance,” as in “cultural relevance” or “political relevance,” was truly enough was invoked in her questioning. What should we be doing instead of just making things relevant? A teacher’s revolutionary love cannot only be demonstrated through lessons of the world, it must also occur at the individual and psychological level. Karla reflected that our students must possess both recognition of dominant systems that harm them and recognition of how they might manifest the consequences of those systems by engaging in activities that harm themselves and/or others. Losing attention to the necessity for individual transformation makes us miss the point. As Karla asserted, our students must internalize these ideas, which are at the heart of her own political perspectives, in order to make this a “life thing.” Her concern for whether students actually worked to make sustainable change within their lives was hitting closer to home because of teaching seniors. She was concerned that some of her students who just graduated would not continue on the trajectory she had intended for them to be on – to live a life of critical engagement that would move them closer to “freedom.” With her out of the picture, she was concerned whether what she did for those four years with her students actually mattered.
As a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner, Karla demonstrated that the work was more than pedagogy in the classroom. The work had to transcend the four walls of the school and permeate the students’ lives in such a way that authentically developed within each of them the agency and commitment to continue the vision and mission of the school into and through their adulthood. Karla indicated that the critically conscious practitioner knows that the work to be done is difficult and requires sustained effort over the long haul. The humanizing and critically conscious practitioner must recognize the past and present conditions and experiences, but have her gaze set towards the future.

As a teacher leader, Karla was still emerging in her development. Her political perspectives of being a critically conscious practitioner as a leader were built upon the same foundation as her clarity as a classroom teacher, but were still emerging in detail and depth. Until the year of this research, she never had any leadership training or regular mentoring. Part of the architecture of support to help develop her leadership capacity more intentionally than before included me co-leading the English department with her as well as having weekly one-on-one check in sessions. Her work to support the novice teachers daily, as I was at the school site only twice a week, was guided by the school’s inspirational and literal structures.

As a leader, the humanizing and critically conscious practitioner is also concerned with the ability of her colleagues to synergistically contribute to helping students get closer to freedom. Early in the school year, Karla’s approach was to support her colleagues through modeling such a commitment and practice herself. When reflecting upon how she supported the development of Tran, a first year English teacher, during her beginning-of-the-school year interview, she revealed,

With Tran, I check in with her informally more than anything and in department meetings, because I know that you coach her a lot. Usually when I check in with her, there's not a
whole lot from me. I have a question every now and then. And I think she has really clear purpose, so a lot of times it really isn't, I don't know if she needs a lot of that. I think the long-term part is important. And I don't know if there's a way to communicate it through doing. And maybe that's just my own philosophy. Purpose and what you believe is something that you live. There's things you could say but and you could help to frame things, like this is why we do what we do, and we do that in everything, and helping to see examples and models and lesson plans and how I frame things for students and things like that, but more than anything is the modeling. (10/5/14)

Tran was one of two novice English teachers in Karla’s department. As indicated by Karla, Tran already had a “really clear purpose” and was coached my me “a lot.” Therefore, according to Karla, Tran did not need “a lot of that.” The “that” was in relation to nurturing the political perspectives and pedagogical practices of others. Her reflection during this interview suggested that “more than anything,” if she just modeled things, other teachers would understand how to do it. While modeling is certainly a component of influencing the political perspectives and pedagogy of other teachers into becoming critically conscious practitioners, the other things she mentioned, framing, explaining, providing examples and resources, are important as well. It was not clear why she de-emphasized those things as opposed to recognizing all those as well as modeling the clarity of her purpose.

The other novice teacher in the English department was a man who was in his first year of credentialed experience and was new to Eastside during this research. However, he also had found success working for approximately 10 years in youth development at a different high school that was not far from Eastside. Karla’s experiences with him in trying to support his development as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioner were significantly different than her experiences with Tran.

In her beginning-of-the-school year interview, Karla reflected upon being often faced with not only helping to support novice teachers in developing the technical skills related to
curriculum and instruction, but also in helping them to grow in their thinking of why they did what they did, thought the ways they thought, and felt the ways they felt. Such a concern was humanizing, consciousness raising, and intellectually engaging. She thought back to how she supported the other teacher in her department during a period where he was struggling,

I often ask him questions and often remind him that it's a process, and it's not easy, and I remind him that our young people are just that. They're young people. They manifest the effects of colonialism and a lot of times we are the agents of the state and it's not our fault, but that's who we sometimes are to some of our students, and it is our job to try to break through that, but sometimes we can't, at least not in that moment. And maybe down the line at some point maybe there is a breakthrough, and that's wassup. But if not our job is still to be not an agent of the state for our students. Our job is still to be a counter narrative to what schooling is for our young people, even when they can't see it for themselves. That's still our purpose, because that's what they deserve. (10/2/14)

While Karla did not reveal what “questions” she often asked in order to problematize the teacher’s behaviors and/or actions, she did empathize with him in the way that she recognized his experiences and journey as process that was difficult in nature. She, however, did not stop there. Karla then engaged the novice teacher in a discourse that challenged power in society. She reminded the teacher whom he worked with – youth. In particular, he worked with teenagers who might project certain behaviors that were consistent with being a teenager. She did not point this out as a dismissive act that said “teenagers will be teenagers” or “it’s whatever.” She did this to frame that their students may not yet possess the language and critical knowledge to make sense of their day-to-day behaviors. Implicit with her colonial analysis was her appropriation of it to their context: urban schooling. That is, students attending school in their city had too often been faced with teachers who believed that in order to regain some semblance of control, they needed to take an uncompromising, dictatorial, authoritarian approach. Karla reminded him about the project all teachers took to be at Eastside – to be “counter narratives” to the dominant discourse of urban schooling. She situated this endeavor into the bigger picture of
what their students rightfully deserved – a quality education -- even if they never received or been told that they deserved one. Karla was unapologetic in her framing likely because of her own political perspective that recognized the success of the novice teacher as paramount to the success of “our” young people – not “his” young people, but “our” young people. There was a collective ownership and commitment demonstrated through a maternal sensibility that was concerned with the social and emotional development of another teacher. This maternal sensibility fueled Karla’s political perspective in a way that reflected her profound relational capacity, which was integrally connected to her identity as a political being, who made constant parallels between schooling and society, school practices and social reality. This in turn, committed Karla to helping others, such as the novice teacher described here, and their young people. Her political perspectives as a critically conscious teacher leader were rooted in an ethic of care that was humanizing, intellectually engaging, and reflexive.

Despite this commitment, the journey to develop the male teacher in her department as a critically conscious practitioner was not easy for her. In a journal entry she wrote in the 2nd semester she explained,

Working with this teacher this year has been a trip. I guess it’s fitting “trip” is a synonym for “journey”. It started off in a really frustrating way. From the beginning, it was clear that there were gender dynamics that were getting in the way of us collaborating effectively. I felt like the things I said or suggested weren’t valued unless validated by G. In our collaboration on the English 4 curriculum, we weren’t co-planning the way we had originally decided. I was doing all the work, and he was expecting to receive all the materials. Because we didn’t know each other well, we also weren’t communicating well to understand from each other’s perspective, what was happening and why, and to clarify what each of our roles would be.

When it became clear that he was struggling with his classes, our relationship shifted from collaborative to more of a coaching one. This was a rough transition. I knew that he was having a difficult time with the fact that he was struggling and that he had personalized and internalized a lot of that, and I didn’t want to add to that. So, I figured I would use what would have been our co-planning sessions to do some coaching, but still under the guise of co-planning. This was still harder than I thought! Most weeks, he
forgot we were supposed to meet, so I would have to send him a text to remind him, and by the time he showed, we didn’t have much time left. Given that time constraint and the culture between us, it was difficult to build a meaningful relationship with him. It was also difficult to move beyond the gendered dynamics and the lack of trust we began with.

Midway through the 2nd quarter, I finally set some boundaries. I told him that we had to stick to our agreed-upon meeting time, and that we needed to keep our meetings consistent. At the time, it was a little awkward to “enact” my department lead authority in that way, but I’m glad that I did because ultimately, what it led to was our being able to build together. We absolutely built curriculum and even a little bit of coaching during those meetings. But really though, that semester, during those meetings, we mostly built on a personal tip. We spent at least the first half of our meeting time checking in (mostly Julio) and venting. Then we’d get to the work. What this has led to is that this semester, he asks questions; he asks for feedback; he values what I think; he wants to know what I think about his lesson plans and assessments. And most importantly, G don’t have to co-sign on it for it to be valid!

This process has taught me a lot about what it means to coach somebody – people can’t and/or don’t learn from someone they don’t know or trust. It’s true for our students, it’s definitely true for me, and so it makes sense that it would be true for teachers. It makes me think about the ways in which to best get to know teachers with different personalities and learning styles in order to help earn their trust and help them learn. It also makes me think about how to then build from that trust to have some critical and difficult conversations. I’ve got lots of research and practice to do if I’m going to be able to live up to my role as a department lead. (Karla’s Journal, 2/15/15)

Recognizing that this was a lengthy segment of data to present, I chose to do so, because of the ways that it simultaneously revealed Karla’s development in each of the four categories of teacher development. Karla’s skill level as an emerging teacher leader was exemplified in a number of ways through this reflexive entry. In the first paragraph of her entry, Karla provided historical context of how the year began with this particular teacher. She highlighted gender dynamics in how this teacher might have recognized her authority compared to mine. She noted communication challenges and unclear expectations. While gender dynamics could very well have been significant impediment to their professional relationship, given Karla’s articulated political perspectives as a critically conscious practitioner, it was surprising that she never drew attention to it with this teacher. She never indicated that she attempted to directly engage him
around what would likely have been a difficult, but important conversation. Implicit in her narrative, was that she perhaps kept her frustrations to herself and allowed the teacher’s behaviors to continue which seemed to have created some type of dependency. Applying a gender analysis could suggest that the male teacher might have seen Karla in a maternal light in how he seemed to expect her to provide for him. Karla might have furthered that maternal relationship as a humanizing practitioner in how she kept providing, while not drawing awareness to it. Part of what might have been required to develop this male teacher as a critically conscious practitioner would have been to intellectually engage him in a conversation that brought light to the gender politics that might have been playing out. Such a conversation might have assisted in helping the teacher to examine how his behavior might have contradicted with his ideologies and those of the school.

In her 2nd paragraph, Karla continued to narrate how the relationship progressed, but with more detail that added complexity to the situation. She indicated that the teacher was struggling and had difficulty with the fact that he was struggling, likely because he found success with youth in another context. She had to shift more towards having a “coaching” stance with the teacher, rather than the collaborative one she had first attempted. By “coaching,” she likely meant that she sometimes took a facilitative stance, but mostly an instructional/directive one. By this point, Karla revealed that holding this coaching stance with him was difficult for her. Part of the reasons included the dynamics that had already existed, but also implicated was the time constraints that were likely related to the structure of the school, but also Karla’s ability to manage the teacher and their relationship within the structure.

In the last two paragraphs, Karla proceeded to detail how the change in coaching stance progressed. She also started to assert her leadership more. More importantly, she noted how she
acted as a humanizing practitioner to influence her work as a critically conscious practitioner. Both these roles often go hand-in-hand with each other, so it was not surprising that Karla made this connection when she mentioned that building trust could lead to having authentic, critical dialog. What was also important to note was Karla’s recognition of herself as a learner. Though she was an experienced teacher of young people, she knew she was still a novice as a coach and being a department lead in general. She knew that in order to become better at her role as a leader, she would have to act as an intellectually engaged practitioner who did more “research and practice.”

Similar to the previous subsection on the Humanizing Practitioner, this one only featured an analysis of one teacher, Karla. In coherence with the overall findings of the data analysis, the presentation of data in this subsection on the Critically Conscious Practitioner also revealed instances of her development as a humanizing, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioner. Recognizing that Janelle has not yet been discussed, I will proceed to present data to reveal the interrelatedness of her development in the following sections.

*Intellectually Engaged Practitioners*

Eastside High revealed that building teacher capacity required intellectual engagement. Teachers must be challenged intellectually and then be given opportunities to put those challenges to practice. At Eastside, teachers were intellectually engaged in their journey as humanizing and critically conscious practitioners and challenged to be continuously reflective along their way.

Janelle was in her second year at Eastside and first year as the Science department lead during the time of this research. Janelle was a unique participant in this study and frankly, a unique teacher and teacher leader in general. Janelle received much of her teacher preparation
through grounded experience. During this research, she was still working to officially obtain her credential. Her beginning-of-the-school year interview revealed that prior to working at the school, she taught in for three years at three different schools located in the same city as Eastside. In each of the three schools, she started as a substitute early in the year, was asked to remain for the rest of the year as a long-term sub, but then not allowed to return the following year as a regular classroom teacher because she did not yet have her credential. She was, however, part of a locally-based teacher pipeline program within the school district that sought to recruit and support local people to teach in the local schools. This program in itself was not a teacher preparation program, so Janelle’s years of time within it did not give credit towards a credential. The assets she brought to that program, however, were quickly recognized and rewarded in the way that she was provided the opportunity to act as a content area leader. By the time she arrived at Eastside, she already had numerous skills as a teacher. Because she was a science teacher in a department that struggled to maintain stability in retaining teachers and providing a learning experience consistent with the rest of the school, Janelle quickly showed promise as an anchor. Under more stable conditions, Janelle likely would not have risen to the role of science department lead. However, the opportunity along with her political perspectives, pedagogy, and leadership potential were significant in making her a recognizable figure worthy of investment.

This situation also went the other way. That is, Janelle also saw Eastside as a place worthy of investment. In her beginning-of-the-school year interview, Janelle revealed that her clarity of purpose and practice aligned with that of the school’s. She reflected,

"With Eastside, it matches my fire. The feel of it. It has the same or similar population I want to work with. It's still in the city I want to work in. And then looking at the scope and sequence of what the school does and all the other departments and seeing the social justice lens really caught my attention. I feel what the school opens us up to do and what it exposes the students to, goes along with what I want and still gives me a chance to learn myself. Also at Eastside, I could teach science, but still teach life, accountability,"
advocacy, really go behind just a lab report. I could open up cultural connections without feeling penalized. I could connect it to the city and the things they know without someone questioning my science. I'm still doing it. (10/15/14)

The notion of Janelle’s “fire” was linked to her political perspectives in each of the four categories of teachers developing as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. Her drive, purpose, and motivation for what she taught, where she taught, and whom she taught could all represent what fueled this fire of hers. Similarly, the drive, the purpose, and the motivation behind what, how, and why Eastside did what it did could also be considered “fire.” She reflected her alignment with things that seemed important to her, such as where the school served, who the school served, and how the school served. The school was located in the town where she lived and grew up. It served black and brown youth. It strived for rigor in a way that built the skills and content of the discipline while also layering knowledge of self and critical consciousness.

Janelle implied that the school’s fire was also unique from her previous experiences in teaching science. As an Eastside science teacher, she did not have to worry about treating science as an ideologically neutral discipline, as a discipline devoid of the complexities of humanity, power, and knowledge. She was intellectually engaged to stretch her pedagogy and content in humanizing, critically conscious, relevant, and more complex ways. Whereas, we could infer that she in fact had to worry about keeping science within a certain box at the other schools where she previously taught. At Eastside she did not have to worry about layering “life, accountability, advocacy” in how she taught science without being “penalized.” At another school, she might have had to worry about that. She might have had to teach science in a prescriptive way and that was not as intellectually engaging as how she had conceptualized teaching science to her students.
As an intellectually engaged practitioner, Janelle also believed she could trust and rely in the experience and expertise of her colleagues, particularly throughout the school year where this research took place. Perhaps because she believed that she would not be judged and/or perhaps because she felt comfortable and trusting enough in her colleagues, Janelle was able to reach out more for help to a variety of people when she needed. In her end-of-the-school year interview, she reflected,

Everybody, we’re on the same page. It doesn’t feel like, you know, dumping on one person, because they are little stronger than the rest, which is what I felt like at first. But this year, I definitely was like I can go to the other teachers and say, ‘Hey, what did you do for this, I have a student who’s struggling, and I know you teach them, and they can’t read the science text that well and I know that you have them for English, were some of your strategies to help the student access the text?’ And being able to do that has just made me take away some of the hopeless feelings to be like “Work on progress or we’re gonna get this done,” and everybody has the same intentions even if we don’t always like the way we get there because everyone has their own thing. We come together as community and it takes the burden and pressure off that I never felt until this year.

(6/1/15).

It was not clear who Janelle was referring to when she identified a person who was a “little stronger than the rest.” Given that she was referring to her experience from the previous school year before this study began, which was her first year at Eastside, she was likely associating this person to be one of the more experienced, well-trusted teachers. If that was the case, then if many people often went to one or two well-trusted teachers, then Janelle likely implied that she perceived those teachers to be stretched to capacity and had little time to help another colleague, such as her. She likely felt that she would be bothering that teacher if she went to her/him for help often. Those feelings, in turn, caused her to feel “hopeless,” likely because she believed that she had no one else to turn to and therefore on her own. Throughout “this year,” she felt more of a sense of crew, because “we come together as community.”

We intellectually engage
Janelle’s development as an intellectually engaged practitioner was coupled with her development as a teacher leader. In the earlier years at Eastside, teachers like Karla and Eric revealed that little structure and support existed. There was not enough systematic support provided to intentionally develop teachers as leaders. Sometimes some teachers were just thrown into roles. Janelle implied that those previous conditions were changing at Eastside. She was eager to “step up” and help her department, which did not have a teacher leader during her first year at Eastside, progress to the next level. Though she did not indicate why she believed that such responsibility was offered to her beginning her second year at Eastside, she noted that she was believed in. Such a belief engaged Janelle rather than discouraged her. It also aligned with her “grand scheme” of what she wanted to do – give back to youth of color as a teacher and leader in her town. As an intellectually engaged practitioner, Janelle demonstrated how such engagement helped to deepen her political perspectives and purpose. To support her intellectual engagement and emergence as a teacher leader, she was also offered an architecture of support
that would lay out a plan, identify what she might need to learn, and then provide consistent mentorship and support along the way.

This was an important cultural norm within the crew that Janelle exemplified – to believe in the expansive pedagogical power of an individual teacher to grow into someone that she currently was not yet. If power and recognized knowledge were only held in an organization by a few, then that organization would struggle with sustainability over the long haul. As obvious as it sounds, developing intellectually engaged practitioners required both the cultural and structural conditions to intellectually engage teachers. An organization’s strength still lied in its people. In the case of Eastside, it was the crew who had to manifest the school’s cultural and structural conditions into everyday, dynamic, complex, exhausting, and exhilarating life. Believing in the expansive power in a person meant that a person’s power must have the conditions and opportunities to be expanded. If the school leadership shut the door right away by saying to Janelle, “oh no, I don’t think you’re ready,” then there could have been a number of consequences. Janelle could have started questioning how valued, recognized, and supported she felt by the school. She could have questioned whether the school was helping her to grow. She could have started to lose ownership and a sense of responsibility in the school. Instead, she felt more empowered. She found validation that helped to build her confidence. She became intellectually engaged which propelled her desire to continue to learn, become better, and contribute to deepening the school. She also started to develop more clarity in her own trajectory in becoming a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, reflective practitioner. Coupled with being reflective, being intellectually engaged helped to deepen the complexity of understanding what it meant to be a humanizing and critically conscious practitioner. The intellectual engagement to help in the uplift of emerging leaders like Janelle, helped in the
collective uplift of the crew. Janelle was fed so that she could in turn be leveraged to feed others in more direct ways (one does not have to promoted to a department lead in order to feed others).

At the same time, Janelle, an emerging teacher leader, was placed in a challenging situation at Eastside. As a Black woman in a position of leadership traditionally occupied by White men, Janelle had two novice male teachers in her department who were both new to Eastside. One teacher was Mark and the other was a man of Mexican heritage. When asked in her beginning-of-the-school year interview how what she tried to guide the political perspectives and pedagogical practices of those male teachers, she made this reflection,

If you want someone to really follow you and believe in what you believe in, you have to show them that you know and understand them. It's one thing to come into an area and be sympathetic and teach off of that. It's another thing to be empathetic but move forward, and I think when you're not culturally responsive that sympathy kicks in, which leads to this coddling thing, which leads to further holding back a group of students, in particular with students of color who come from lower income areas. We don't need your sympathy. We don't need you to come in and save the world. We need these kids to achieve towards greatness. You have assumptions of things you think is going on and you teach that way. You let a kid get off the hook with wild things, stunting their growth, because all you could think about is blah blah blah going home to his poor little house in his depraved town. No, that's not what it's about. When we think of culturally responsive, we get stuck on a very narrow view. There's so much more to that. How do you make things relevant to them? How do you make them buy into it? How do you show them wassup so they could fight the mental battle for this world doesn’t want them to succeed and see themselves as successful? How do you give them assessments and daily assignments and make them really get engaged? How do you think about their reading levels and language barriers to help them get through this big science chapter with words that some of us can't even pronounce sometimes. How do you take that out and make them see why it's important to know? How do you grow a passion to want to do science later? (10/15/14)

As a humanizing, critically conscious, and intellectually engaged practitioner, she was clear in how she followed the architecture of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Within the CRP framework, Janelle demonstrated her clarity of practice. First she highlighted, as if trying to push the thinking and assumptions of another teacher that we could not afford to “coddle” our children. That “holds them back” and lowered expectations of what they could and should be
able to do. Students must be expected and supported towards “achieving greatness.” Second, Janelle asserted that students must be able to “see themselves as successful,” regardless of their racial or socioeconomic background. In particular, students must see themselves as capable of the kinds of success that the dominant society tended to withhold from them. That is, they must resist the dominant associations of negative characteristics of being part of their racial or social group. Their strengths must be used as assets to re-engage them academically. Third, Janelle claimed that students must learn “wassup,” or rather, how the systemic nature of inequity in society worked, so that they could “fight the mental battle for this world that doesn’t want them to succeed.” She revealed her endeavor to help remove barriers for her students to become engaged in science and identify themselves as scientists.

Janelle’s political perspectives as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner revealed her emerging clarity as a teacher leader. While provocative and credible, the questions she rattled off at the end of her excerpt could likely overwhelm a novice teacher. She named many complex things to consider, but offered no concrete ideas about how she could help a teacher figure out the answers. Janelle clearly demonstrated a fundamental understanding of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for her own teaching. However, by that point in the school year, she clearly had yet to make sense of the process she had to take to concretely influence and develop the teachers in her department. Janelle had yet to learn how to adjust to her teachers’ needs and guide them from there.

She demonstrated some of those struggles during a January 20 Science department meeting that I observed. All three members of the department were present. Prior to the meeting, Janelle and I did not plan the agenda together. My field notes reflected that the meeting followed a loose agenda that began with a check in that asked, “How was your 3-day weekend.” The
remainder of the meeting included an update on each teacher’s performance assessment, how
science journals (a new tool all of them recently implemented) were going, and then a discussion
on strategies for building science vocabulary.

To frame the sharing of performance assessments, Janelle mentioned that sharing
performance tasks was to be able to, “get an idea of what they’re looking like” and “if you don’t
have questions, that’s fine. If you just want a space to share and get high fives, that’s fine too.”
Such a framing did not sound consistent with what an intellectually engaged practitioner might
do. There was no indication of a clear purpose, direction, or outcome. For example, her
comment to her teachers about not needing to share an inquiry question to problematize their
performance tasks created room for ambiguity as to what to expect from this agenda item. There
was also no process or protocol articulated. When this agenda item began, the male teacher who
was not involved in this study shared a handout that articulated the requirements and evaluation
rubric for his lab performance assessment. He passed around the requirements packet. This
teacher also presented some first drafts of student work that exemplified a range of quality.
When he was finished sharing, Janelle responded with some basic comments such as, “I like that
the requirements were laid out for students” and “I like that you have high expectations.”
Mark’s contribution was to ask the teacher sharing, “How did students interact with this.” A
short explanation followed about the sequence of steps that the teacher took.

When Mark provided an update of his performance assessment, he read from some notes
he had written during the meeting as well as from his copy of the performance task requirements.
No other teachers were provided a copy of the requirements. Mark did not have an example of
the task nor student work. Mark’s notes centered upon what the task basically was, the steps he
was taking, and the adjustments he was making in response to the students’ responses to learning
the content. It was not clear how much guidance Janelle had provided the teachers on what to bring to their department meeting. Regardless of the amount of guidance she provided, the resulting discussion lacked in substance. For instance, Janelle referred to Mark’s task requirements, which lay on the desk facing him. She mentioned, “maybe you could bold or italicize the learning targets since there are so many, you see what I’m saying? I know that’s not the biggest thing…[pause] but um, yeah, I think it’s good.” There were many missed opportunities from Janelle in how this agenda item was facilitated. Without clarity in the purpose, protocol, and intended outcomes for this agenda item, Janelle demonstrated how she struggled as an intellectually engaged practitioner. Without being clear herself, Janelle did not know what to discuss. She either provided comments in general terms or in a way that did not offer feedback that was viewed as valuable. From observing how both her teachers responded to the comments made by her, they both did not seem very engaged at all, let alone intellectually engaged. This example of how Janelle facilitated this meeting, demonstrated how she was in the beginning stages of the learning process of how to concretely influence and develop the teachers in her department.

The reflective memo I wrote after her department meeting confessed,

I wish it didn’t take me this long to finally get to observe her facilitate a department meeting. It offered so much insight. I could have provided more directed support early on. I’m definitely still learning too. (1/20/15)

As evidenced through this memo, I was also clearly developing as an intellectually engaged practitioner along with the focal participants. I took for granted the details required to support novice teacher leaders in facilitating department meetings. In my memo, I continued to reflect by sketching out my ideas for a developmental sequence of topics that I would focus on with
novice department leads in the future. I also sketched out a simple framework that I would introduce to Janelle when we debriefed her department meeting.

Even with the community built upon a foundation of trust, openness, and a culture of intellectual engagement, the responsibility and the skills to push an individual teachers’ growth was not easy. What were those coaching moves to do this in a humanizing, warm demanding, and non-judgmental way? As a reflective practitioner, Janelle revealed that this complex process of nurturing another teacher’s growth was difficult for her, especially as a novice department lead. In her end-of-the-school year interview, she revealed that she certainly developed a newly found respect for this responsibility. She indicated,

It’s hard. It definitely way more challenging, and I certainly gained a new respect for anyone who has to deal with new teachers. No offense, because obviously I was once a new teacher, but there’s so many little things to look at, and I think before being department lead, I only saw the big things. It’s easy if you’re not training anyone who’s new to a profession to call out stuff like, “if we just teach the new teachers these things, it will be okay.” Yeah right. It made me respect the process of just about everything. (6/1/15)

Janelle revealed that until she got the opportunity, she did not realize the complexity associated with not just being part of crew, not just leading crew, but what it meant to be partially responsible for catalyzing teacher growth in the crew. She illuminated that she became aware of all the “little things” that must be examined and considered when helping to cultivate a teacher’s journey towards becoming a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner. Janelle may have demonstrated leadership potential through all her hard work and active intellectual engagement as a teacher, but like me, she learned that she cannot take the process to lead and nurture the growth of teachers for granted. When probed deeper to provide an example of “the process” she articulated,
It was just challenging in terms of like they both came in at different levels and so trying to keep up with them and making sure I help them as much as I can. I know there were certain times where I had to apologize just because I felt like I wasn’t as helpful as I could be, being that they were two new teachers and I was new at leadership. Like things outside of our science department meetings where they needed support and I feel like that was one of the key things that helped me grow as a leader. I got to practice right there on the spot with tough situations and they also made it really easy when I had check-ins with them and even consulting with you about things. (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

Janelle a few key learnings to note. First she recognized that different teachers needed different kinds of support. When she realized she was not always providing the necessary directed support, she was humble enough to apologize while also recognizing the inherent challenge of having two novice teachers to support while being new at being an official lead to them. The second thing to note from Janelle’s reflection was that she realized the importance of practicing her coaching, both in the moment when a teacher was with students and in a reflective space such as a one-on-one check in session. When I continued to ask for examples during her interview, she responded,

I learned to be careful with words and how you frame them. There was certainly some times where I wanted to question Mark, like you know, his class cohesion. That was one of the biggest things with Mark. I wanted to ask him, “Are you holding back because even though that you don’t want to be seen as white male privileged type of teacher, you’re still a white male.” For example, there are times like because we had different prep periods where I’d walk in and I’m like, ‘Tell that student no, he can’t leave the class right now. Tell him to sit down.” I’m big on like that because there’s a lot of times where there are a lot of kids in the hallway for one class and he is just soft spoken about it. So I wanted him to figure out like “Which direction will I face my body when I’m helping a student, so I can help him while still watching the class?” He just need to learn some more techniques about cohesion in the classroom but if it’s something like deeper then it’s a harder conversation we have like, ‘How do you as a white male show authority without feeling like you’re oppressing?” So I think that was like the hard part of trying to figure out where the problems really came from and how to support him, and I don’t know how to ask which one are you struggling with? And I’m usually comfortable talking about race, but I think I felt uncomfortable trying to push, because of my title, which is funny because I talk about how authority sometimes act from power and say my words are the ones that count and everything I say goes. I think I internalized that I didn’t’
want to be that and so maybe I hold back because I didn’t want to be seen as that kind of lead. (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

As an emerging teacher leader who was also developing as a humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioner, Janelle demonstrated that she was beginning to have the kind of deeper thinking needed to effectively problematize a situation. While she did not actually have the conversation with Mark about racial privilege or power, she started trying to think from his perspective. She started to consider how Mark’s political perspectives affected the way he interacted with students. She started to consider how she, as a Black woman in a position of power, could discuss race and power with a White man who not only had less experience than her, but also was accountable to her. Such thinking on the part of Janelle was evidence of her growth as an intellectually engaged practitioner in humanizing, critically conscious, and reflective ways. She was intersecting what she had learned from experience with theory and with a real life situation. As she continued to develop through the years, it would be logical that she would eventually learn how to take such thinking to the next level – using such analyses to hold potentially difficult conversations.

One example of how all the focal teacher leaders developed as intellectually engaged practitioners was during the participant meetings where we discussed this research and planned for presenting at a national conference. In our first participant meeting, I began by inviting them to highlight their prior experiences with presenting at academic conferences. I then grounded us in the nature of the study by re-sharing the research questions and providing a short summary of the work and its intended critical purposes. Below is an excerpt from an analytical memo I made following the meeting:

Today we had our first meeting to go over the packet I created and talk about this work. Our check in already highlighted a commonality – what we all saw in many conferences
– many White people whom we felt were disconnected from the kind of work we were doing. Karla, who’s probably had the most experiences in presenting and attending conferences, highlighted a distinction in experiences between people-of-color-run conferences and those not. I think there is opportunity there trying to illuminate what is it about people-of-color-run conferences that she (and others) gravitates more towards. Eric noted that he felt that participants who have attended presentations he’s been a part of (i.e. AERA) were interested in what they could take away. He used the word “steal,” which is a judgment based off an assumption of other people’s motives. His own background and interpretation of histories involving marginalized peoples of color can definitely help make sense of such strong word choice. There is a legacy of white Europeans “stealing” from others. This was and is the colonial project. Such a project privileges a story written from a dominant perspective and subordinates the rest. It’s a project that fuels the indignation of people like Eric and the other participant researchers, who validated his comments. Janelle highlighted her resonation with the Indigenous research perspective that I made transparent. For one, she recognized the idea that this research prioritized the benefit to this community, and not necessarily the work of the researcher(s). She reflected that me, as a significant insider to this community, was also instrumental in figuring out how my impact to the community could and should be captured. That is, she made known that I impact this community and each of the participants greatly. So how and where in this “research” do I make explicit how my direct involvement benefits this community? (Analytical Memo, 12/17/14)

This excerpt revealed two things I wish to highlight. First, through intellectual engagement, it revealed some political perspectives from the participants. Each of the participants revealed some sort of stigma with academic conferences. For instance, Karla’s analysis of such conferences indicated that academic conferences were not intended for “them.” The “them” was in reference to people of color. Academic conferences, according to the participants were organized and attended by mainly White people who were far removed from communities such as ours (i.e. urban, working class or poor communities occupied mainly by people of color). Eric went so far as to say that some participants who were not well grounded in doing effective work in urban communities stole ideas from those who did at these conferences. These perceptions ultimately led us all to recognize that in order to change this perceived dynamic within academic conferences, people from communities such as ours would need to enter these spaces and narrate our own stories in methodologically sound ways.
The second theme to highlight from the excerpt from my analytic memo above was that it revealed a degree of relationality I had with the participants in facilitating their growth through intellectual engagement as well as through collaboration. Janelle, in particular, mentioned that I should make clear throughout all the research how much of a participant I was – how much I influenced the teachers in their journey in becoming humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. She also challenged me to begin considering what I would do with all this research.

Following this first meeting with the teacher leaders, it became quickly clear that even though we were only mid-way through the study, there was too much data for what we had capacity to analyze and figure out how to concisely present it. So, to make the reduction and analytical work more manageable given our limited capacity and available time, as well as to produce a reasonable and realistic product suited to the conference presentation structure, we decided to only utilize the beginning-of-school-year interviews as our data source. Using spreadsheets in Google Drive technology, I designed a rudimentary and quick way to do some simple coding and identification of themes that each teacher leader could also access and affect. I organized the interviews, which I transcribed myself, into separate tabs and did one round of coding myself. At that point, using a grounded theory approach, I had only identified 25 codes. Following that round of coding, I met with the teacher leaders again to facilitate a building background knowledge session on the theoretical framework that would be used to make sense of the data and then learn about and practice the coding process. For instance, after engaging with the concepts of the theoretical framework, we took only one piece of it: Bartolome’s (1994) and Beauboeuf-LaFontant’s (1999) conceptualization of political clarity. I then led them to examine an excerpt from one interview where I had coded a few instances as being examples of
political clarity. We discussed how those particular quotes represented political clarity and what
nuances they each had. Then, I tasked them each with independently examining a different
interview and coding it only for political clarity. After about fifteen minutes, I had them stop to
share and discuss what they found and engaged us to dialog further about this particular process
that went from theoretical framework to reviewing data to coding. Here was an excerpt from
Eric’s journal reflecting on this participant meeting,

It felt good to dive into work “outside” of my daily M-F Eastside routine. It’s always
refreshing to sit down with you, Karla, and Janelle. Reading data had two effects on me
1) after some deep practice in this teaching game for a few years, reading what was said
at meetings “on paper” was very clear and, with the help of the identified codes, could
read and analyze them a little bit easier. 2) It also illuminated to me that this data
analysis and research game is NO JOKE and that so few us critical educators of color are
not in the Ph.D. researcher fields enough! (2/13/15)

This reflection revealed how Eric was finding benefit to the learning and doing component of the
participant meeting. Already having a set of identified codes reduced the cognitive load in
having to determine them from scratch together. As such, it allowed for the focus of the practice
to not be on developing codes, but in applying codes. This excerpt also revealed how Eric was
realizing the political importance of learning and engaging in this type of academic research.
Specifically, much of Eric’s work as a teacher has been to forefront counter narratives – counter
narratives of history, of our communities, of his students. Here, we see in this process that he,
himself, was intellectually engaging as a learner, which allowed him to work on contributing to a
counter narrative of his own experience.

While the participant meetings acted as spaces to contribute to the development of the
participants as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective
practitioners, they were not spaces that were institutionally organized by Eastside. These
meetings were treatments of my own that would not have happened within the existing structure of the school. At the same time these spaces revealed my own political perspectives and stance as a participant researcher.

**Reflective Practitioners**

The reflective practitioner at Eastside High was a teacher active in evaluating how s/he was developing as a humanizing, critically conscious, and intellectually engaged practitioner. Such a teacher had to learn to be vulnerable and honest. This teacher had to develop the capacity to apply a critical lens to make sense of and problematize her or his experiences. This teacher knew that engaging in such a practice was not intended to pathologize and highlight incompetency, but rather to identify areas of growth and then work towards those improvements.

In Karla’s end-of-the-school year interview, she was asked to speak to areas where she may have grown and how. She explained,

I think a lot of my growth came from being put in a situation where I was a coach because it has forced me to think about my own instructional practice there. So asking questions and giving feedback and pushing back sometimes and following a guide of somebody else’s practice helped me to reflect on my own practice. For me to think about what are the different teacher moves or the different things that I do that I don’t even think about because I don’t think about them anymore, but it forced me to think about those things and helped me to be more intentional about lots of different things. It helped me to look at the minute things that I don’t really pay attention to or I hadn’t been paying attention to and it helped me to model certain things and helped me to be able to come back and be able to be of guidance to folks who are struggling and things like that. So I think that was the biggest thing that helped pushed my craft.

In terms of PD, I think the most helpful PD was the one-on-one coaching that you gave me. You know, being able to get support whether it was the curriculum stuff, I’m like ‘G, I have this idea for a performance task. I know what it looks like, but I’m not sure about the details.’ You helped me figure it out by talking through it and like mapping it out and then finally coming to some process or product or both. Also, you helped my leadership like when I had no idea how to help this person, because they’re struggling and I don’t know how to coach and talking through of what those struggles are and what a conversation could look like. So I feel like the bulk of the professional development that I got, even the research that you were doing was invigorating in lots of ways to participate again in intellectual work. So I feel like a lot of times people forget that
teachers are intellectuals and we don’t get challenged on an intellectual level, so that was cool like that was professional involvement to me to be challenged at an intellectual level. (6/1/15)

Much of the growth Karla reflected upon was towards her emergence as a teacher leader. As an effective teacher, she never had to put much consideration into the details and nuances of how she taught. She just taught. As a teacher leader who was responsible for a department with two novice teachers, she had to observe herself and her thinking in order to then determine how she would support the needs of her other teachers. Karla also highlighted the importance of targeted one-on-one support. As a more experienced and effective teacher, Karla was often left alone in her work, because perhaps it was assumed everything was fine and/or it was a higher priority to support other teachers. Whatever the case, Karla’s journey as a reflective practitioner was enhanced when she had a trusted coach with whom she could self reflect.

However, like the gaps that surfaced with my one-on-one support of Janelle, there were also gaps in what Karla needed. She confessed,

As a coach, I don’t feel competent and what I realized is that I’m not a coach and I don’t think it’s accurate to have that as a name yet. It’s something that I eventually want to be and I feel like that role was kind of placed on me last year out of necessity but it wasn’t really fair to either me or the people with whom I was working with because I don’t have much training, I mean, we had training and at some points, but like it’s not fair to put a teacher in a classroom who hasn’t been training like Teach for America, like those kind of programs, and give like two to four weeks to train and then say, ‘You’ve got a teacher.’ But see, they practice on our kids, and we deserve better. Our teachers deserve better too, you know, and I don’t have training. And while you and I are having conversations about what it means to coach, you know, I felt like I need some kind of training because whoever teachers I’m working with deserve that. So I want to eventually be a coach, but I’m not competent as a coach and I’m not a coach. (End-of-the-school year interview, 6/1/15)

Like with Janelle, Karla’s reflection made me realize that she needed a developmentally appropriate plan to nurture her growth over time. Karla affirmed that while Eastside created particular conditions for its teachers to develop as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually
engaged, and reflective practitioners, the school still had gaps in how it culturally and structurally differentiated how teachers developed particular skills they needed. For Karla, the type of skills she believed she needed with was with instructional coaching. It was not clear why she believed that she was not a coach. Perhaps she believed that, because she was never formally trained. Perhaps there were certain experiences she had that made her realize that either she did not know what to do or whatever she tried seemed ineffective. Perhaps she did not believe she was a coach because she had no measures to evaluate herself as a coach. One thing that was clear was that she had high expectations of what a coach should be like. She believed that teachers who have a supposed coach “deserve better.” With Karla’s perspective of committed to work towards getting closer to “freedom,” it was not a surprise that she had high expectations. Karla often discussed how her students, who were often the most marginalized in society, deserved so much better. They were systematically placed in positions time and time again where they were faced in a schooling situation where they were faced with the worst. Such inequity drove Karla to internalize that if she did not feel competent at coaching, she must be incompetent at it. Even if she was still learning, and even if that learning was mostly by experience and observation of people like me, then to her, she must not yet be a coach. This seemed to be dichotomous thinking that neglected the reality of her process of becoming. Her reasoning neglected that identity development is a process.

Nonetheless, Karla’s demonstration of being a reflective practitioner showed that she allowed herself to be honest and vulnerable. She did not reflect upon her areas of growth in a way that acted as negative, self-defeating talk. She critically reflected in a way that provoked her to continue to challenge herself. Karla demonstrated that the reflective practitioner cannot afford to dwell in self pity or doubt. The reflective practitioner must be active in her process for
authentic improvement, because at the end of the day, that was what her students deserved. The students of the reflective practitioner deserved teachers who always worked to self-actualize and become their best.

This subsection focused exclusively on analyzing data from Karla. This decision was not to say that Karla demonstrated more growth as a reflective practitioner than the others. It was to extend all examinations of the teacher leader participants’ journey as teacher leaders who were also instructional leaders. More precisely, the focus on Karla’s narration of her challenges as a “coach” was intended to illuminate a significant gap in Eastside’s program – the way that it intentionally developed teacher leaders as also instructional leaders. Throughout this chapter, each of the participants revealed how they developed as reflective practitioners, but also how they struggled as teacher leaders. Therefore, I believed it adequate to only focus on one teacher to expose the gap in how Eastside developed its teacher leaders as instructional leaders.

The findings from this chapter indicated that Eastside’s mission to develop teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners was an interrelated and layered process that was embedded within both the cultural and structural conditions of the school. While the findings revealed evidence that suggested that Eastside was actively working towards this mission, certain gaps surfaced as well. The most generalizable gap was that teacher leaders needed developmentally appropriate plans targeted to their needs as individuals. Like with the novice teachers, these teacher leaders may have had a type of targeted structure to support their development in some form. However, the targeted support for the teacher leaders was not necessarily because of the designed structure of the school, but rather because of working with me. The targeted support was also not differentiated enough to meet the needs of each teacher leader along a trajectory over time.
The findings within this chapter also reminded us that teachers were still humans who were complex beings of contradiction. The conditions of the school could sometimes fuel those contradictions or contain them in such a way that guided teachers to learn and reflect in ways that helped to create awareness and evoke change in thought and behavior. Such a container indicated that it did not have to be “whatever” with teachers who made mistakes or were still emerging in humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective ways. A container, if robust enough, could guide the way teachers complexly developed over time.

This chapter laid out an examination that followed data analysis procedures from Phases two through four for the focal teacher leaders in this research. It drew out the political perspectives from the participants to describe how they made sense of what it meant to be humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. The next chapter will discuss these findings further by describing how both the novice teachers and teacher leaders’ development as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioners was realized in what I have termed a “Values-Directed School Cohesion Container” for producing “Politically Determined Pedagogues.”
CHAPTER 7
The Politically Determined Pedagogue

Chapter seven builds from the findings from the two preceding analysis chapters by discussing four generalized principles that surfaced. From those four principles, three frameworks have been formed in order to identify architectures of support that could systematize the way that Eastside High worked to develop teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. The four principles will be discussed within three subsections of this chapter that each center on describing a framework. The first of those three frameworks is the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container. This framework will describe the macro structure of Eastside High in the way that its inspirational structures, literal structures, and school culture worked to guide teachers to work in cohesion with the school. As a macro structure, the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container illustrates key relationships with how the school functions in this way.

The second framework is the Political Perspectives Development Process. This framework outlines a system of six inputs and outputs for cultivating teachers’ political perspectives over time. The gaze on political perspectives allows for attending to a complex component of teacher development – what drives and sustains a teacher to do what he does.

The last framework discusses how to cultivate the Politically Determined Pedagogue. It takes into account the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container and the Political Perspectives Development Process in order to argue how a Politically Determined identity and practice could be cultivated. This framework describes five components that work together within the cultural and structural conditions of the school to develop humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners.
Values-Directed School Cohesion Container

The first principle to surface from the research findings is as follows: School Cohesion is values-directed and can be contained within a robustly developed cultural & structural container. The intersection of structure and culture is also values-driven, where each programmatic component is philosophically aligned and made transparent in order for all people who operate within such a framework to believe in and follow a uniform, integrated, interdependent, and clearly articulated process that inspires and supports the work needed to lead towards uncompromising excellence. Such a values-driven structure and culture works to build and sustain what I have named, school cohesion. School cohesion is both a process and product. As a process, it involves the cultural and structural conditions for all members in the school to know what to do, how to do it, and most importantly, why. The why of the various components of school cohesion is rooted in the school’s vision, mission, and values, which are fore fronted in school cohesion rather than falling into the backdrop. In particular, this prioritizing of an explicit set of inspirational structures are what distinguish “school cohesion” from “program coherence,” (Newman, et. al., 2001) which primarily emphasizes pragmatic strategies. School Cohesion requires that teachers and students are bought into having a cohesively-run school where they all 1) know the whats, hows, and whys of what is expected from them, 2) are able to get feedback as to how they are performing towards those expectations and what to do in order to continually improve, 3) utilize structural tools to assist in the processes of the school, 4) culturally reinforce the practices and rationales behind them.

I argue that if the structures are robust enough and believed in, where there are also key purveyors of culture within those structures, then all individuals working at the school can be contained within the boundaries set by the container. Ideologies, behaviors, and practices that
are misaligned or perceived to be misaligned could then get problematized as part of normal practice. With robust enough cultural and structural conditions, the ideologies, behaviors, and practices that do not fit within the container become clear and apparent, and therefore become easier to remove than if there were a more nebulous or no container at all.

Through the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container, individuals can be compelled to function and continually develop within the norms and practices of the school. Teachers’ political perspectives can be cultivated as well as their identity as Politically Determined Pedagogues. Such frameworks make “despair unconvincing and hope practical” (Giroux, 1988, p. 128).

To illustrate this framework, I chose a circle to represent the concept of containment. The other components of the framework acted as layers that built on top of a foundational base. To depict the relationality between those layers, I will describe pieces at a time. At the base of the container are the school’s inspirational structures. The inspirational structures base represents the values-directed philosophies that guide what and how the school and its internal community does. These values-directed philosophies are foundational and all other structures should follow and align with these.

*Figure 2.* Base circle of the values-directed school cohesion container.
Following from the base foundation, the second layer of the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container is represented by the intersection of literal structures with culture. Examples of literal structures at Eastside were Critical Inquiry Groups, the curriculum framework, subject matter scope and sequences, and the Restorative Praxis model. Literal structures such as these intersect with school culture. School culture functions to mediate formal and informal behaviors. The structure and culture create the architecture of support for the people within the school. Together, structure and culture work cohesively to sustain a well-functioning institution.

*Figure 3*. Second layer of the values-directed school cohesion container.

From here, the third layer can be identified. Individual experiences are represented within the center of the circle. This signifies that individuals have experiences that are influenced by the structures and culture of the school. That is, structure and culture influences situations. People within those situations have their own experience. The significance of this layer is to acknowledge that each individual experiences the school in her or his own ways.

*Figure 4*. Third layer of the values-directed school cohesion container.
The fourth layer captures both how individuals as well as groups of people interact, react, and respond to each other and the school. It recognizes how individual experiences are part of a chain of behaviors. Yet, those behaviors could be thwarted from spiraling out of control because of the school’s structure and culture. They become contained.

*Figure 5.* Fourth and final layer of the values-directed school cohesion container.
Through a robust Values-Directed School Cohesion Container, individual ideologies, behaviors, and practices could be controlled to a great degree. Those ideologies, behaviors, and practices that are in conflict or are perceived to be misaligned could surface more evidently and then get problematized as part of the normal occurrences at Eastside. Salient examples of this appeared in the data with novice teacher Mark and teacher leader Eric. If, through the process of problematizing a belief or behavior that an individual is ideologically misaligned, then because of the container, it becomes clear that the individual needs to be engaged in a process of corrective action. With the case of Mark and Eric, the corrective actions included increasing the amount of attention and support in order to empower them to authentically shift. With another teacher who may have a more fixed mindset, then the corrective action could be to work towards mutually agreeing that the school and individual are not well matched and must eventually part ways.

Often times, the situation where a teacher appears to be of a fixed mindset and is perceived to be misaligned with the school becomes the primary consideration. That is, too often to individuals get seen as unable to evolve or modify behavior. Individuals get seen as static beings that cannot change. As such, those individuals get marginalized and it becomes unclear as to what to do with that individual. Such a situation is neither good for the individual, the students, and of course the rest of the school community. What could obviate this situation from occurring?

**Political Perspectives Development Process**

Principles Two and Three lie at the core of creating the conditions for teachers to evolve in thought and behavior. Principle Two is as follows: There must be a belief that the expansive pedagogical power and potential in teachers at the school can be intentionally guided. As a
school, this is an important and courageous stance to make. First, it asserts that all teachers can grow and reach their potential. Second, it says that the school can create the conditions to nurture that process. A teacher’s capacity and capability are not inherently predetermined. It is not whatever. The school can play a systemic role to operationalize a teacher’s capacity building through a designed structure of support. The school’s impact is not whatever. Courage is required to provoke critical and creative thought. A humanizing warm demander stance is necessary to have those conversations to push for ideological conceptual change (Phillip, 2011).

It is too easy to make assumptions and accept behaviors the way they seem to be. Courage and the proper conditions that build trust, real relationships, collective purpose, and inspiration towards possibilities are essential to move from belief to action. Both are necessary. Without action, belief remains abstract and unrealized. Without belief, action becomes haphazard and misguided.

Given principle number two, where are the high leverage areas of focus in order to help teachers make necessary shifts and growth? What areas need to be developed in order to empower teachers to be active in this process and not been seen as individuals who need to be “fixed”? I argue that the area of high leverage begins with a teacher’s political perspectives.

If Political Clarity (Bartolome, 1994; Beaubeof-LaFontant, 1999) is an idealized destination, then the process of developing one’s political perspectives is the journey. Such a journey is one that is ongoing and deepens with precision through more experience, critical knowledge, critical dialog, and reflection. It allows for an individual to build upon and even scrutinize what she currently believes and understands. It suggests a developmental process – one that can be both exhilarating and painful -- that can be carefully guided.
Teachers evolving their political perspectives will come to recognize that teaching is not a politically neutral undertaking and that schools are ideological institutions built upon a structural foundation that not only mirrors and reproduces society’s dominant forms of knowledge, culture, values, and norms. Teachers gain a critical analysis of how schools have systematically pathologized, discriminated against, and subordinated students from non-dominant groups. Teachers who clearly and critically understand this tradition can therefore work with a commitment to transform this sociocultural reality and the classroom and school level. These teachers have a profound and personal sense of urgency, purpose, and responsibility for breaking the cycle of inequity and subordination in which they believe schools participate. Their ethic of care and love demands in themselves and their students a discipline towards not only achieving academic greatness, but also in engaging in the psychological and political process necessary to navigate an oppressive society and seeing themselves as deserving of achieving excellence.

This notion of political perspectives pave the way for Principle Three which is as follows: Political Perspectives can evolve in intentional ways and be guided inwardly and outwardly by the cultural and structural conditions of the school. In the case of Eastside High, cultivating one’s political perspective towards clarity required three interconnected components: 1) Cultural interactions that influence individual, interpersonal, and collective growth and behavior, 2) Knowledge building, and 3) Prioritizing particular perspectives and dispositions as being more high leverage. A macro and microstructure could be used to illustrate this development process. 

*Figure 6.* Macrostructure for developing political perspectives.
In this illustration, the circle is used again to suggest containment. Political perspectives lie at the center of all circles, since its development is the focus of this framework. The surrounding layers indicate a relationship and interactivity. Teachers must build more knowledge through intellectual engagement, experience, and reflection in order to develop their political perspectives. The process of knowledge building is guided through cultural interactions that allow for spaces to dialog and grapple with tensions and contradictions. The upcoming subsections will now discuss the outer two components of the macrostructure.

*Cultural interactions.* The intellectual process of understanding critical knowledge is not the same as the process to internalize that knowledge and change behavior. The latter is more introspective and requires a critical examination of one’s beliefs and values and how society has shaped them. If not carefully guided, teachers, when placed in conditions where they are questioned about their actions and underlying beliefs and values can feel judged, attacked, and resistant (Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1997; Haberman, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). So what conditions are necessary for inviting the kind of introspection that faces the self?
I argue that the conditions must be cultural and rooted in a firm belief that individuals can shift in belief and behavior given the proper environment. There must be a normalized practice of interactions that problematize behaviors, actions, and language usage. There must also be a hyper awareness of the consequences of placing judgment as well as fearing judgment, both of which can limit the vulnerability, honesty, and openness required in having an authentic dialog.

The findings from this research indicated that there was a cultural norm for teachers at Eastside problematize and not pathologize. The belief is that if teachers can deconstruct their thoughts and behaviors and be made aware when they are contributing to the hegemonic culture of schooling that sorts students by privileging certain types of students and hindering others, then they could reject such behavior (Eubanks, et. al., 1997; Philip, 2011). The normalization of asking questions like, “why do you think that” allows the person asking the question to open a potentially authentic dialog that seeks to understand the underlying ideologies of a comment. Understanding what lies underneath a comment then invites a more appropriately critical discussion that can perhaps be anchored back to any critical knowledge previously learned or towards new critical knowledge that adequately responds to the situation at hand. The person being asked the question, if he believes that it is a “normal” question that is not intending to judge but rather to problem solve and assist, can allow himself to be more vulnerable and willing to engage in a dialog rather than being defensive or simply shutting down. This process suggests that the questioning and subsequent dialog is about being of assistance and helping, rather than “making someone feel bad” and alienating. There becomes a mutual practice of critical care that says that achieving a higher understanding is for the sake of “our” students.

Knowledge Building. Critical knowledge assists teachers to gain the language and theoretical knowledge to talk about and make sense of their previous and current experiences, as
well as have a critical analysis of schooling and society in order to understand how they have been affected. I argue that a school can provide the conditions to offer such critical knowledge. If a school intends on cultivating teachers’ political perspectives, the school must also have clarity as to where it is situated. Eastside High, for example, requires that its teachers be exposed to certain discourses. The school makes a commitment to assert what “knowledge” it believes to be important and high leverage enough to act as anchor texts for the staff.

This knowledge building process is an ongoing one that requires intentionality and commitment towards intellectually developing, particularly when schools tend to de-intellectualize teachers into acting more as technicians (Giroux, 1988, Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2009). The knowledge building process, additionally, should not exist in isolation for the sole purpose of knowing more. This process must be accompanied with the conditions that provoke teachers to self reflect on their own beliefs and prior experiences in order to both make critical sense of the knowledge and know what to do with it, especially if that means changing existing behavior.

The knowledge building process coupled with the cultural conditions for teachers to problematize behaviors, actions, and language usage that may be out of alignment with the critical knowledge are key processes in cultivating political perspectives. Political perspectives, however, are not one dimensional and simply defined. They are layered and parts of complex internal and external processes that take into account numerous factors that have yet to be fully identified. However, without a place to begin, it would be difficult to consistently engage in an active systematic process of cultivating political perspectives. This is where the microstructure of cultivating political perspectives enters.
To illustrate the microstructure, imagine that the center could be expanded as a more detailed graphic. That graphic would highlight the third of the interconnected components, high leverage perspectives to develop.

*Figure 7. Microstructure of developing political perspectives.*

The high leverage perspectives and dispositions can be conceived in a multi directional model that involves inputs that nurture a teacher’s capacity and opportunities for reflexivity, their analysis of schooling and society, and their embrace of struggle and growth. I recognize that there are likely more than three strands that have the potential to act as inputs in influencing the development of political perspectives. However, the findings from this research indicated that these three, which appeared through the data more frequently, demonstrated the most significance. Inputs are dispositions and core understandings. They prime an individual for the process of political perspective development. That is, the degree that one has 1) the capacity and opportunities for Reflexivity, 2) an Analysis of Schooling and Society, and 3) an Embrace of
Struggle and Growth, then I argue that the individual is more equipped for developing a more precise, thorough, and clear political perspective.

The three strands on the right side are bidirectional, because they act as outputs, but also feed back to inform the center, which are the political perspectives. Teachers can both demonstrate and deepen their political perspectives by being able to articulate their clarity of purpose, clarity of practice, and clarity of alignment. Outputs are articulations that reflect political perspectives as well as drive action. Their interconnections ask questions that build off each other. Clarity of Purpose asks, “What am I trying to do and why?” Clarity of Practice asks, “How do I carry out what I’m trying to do and why do I choose those things?” Clarity of Alignment asks, “How does what I do and how I do it align with my fellow teachers, the school overall, and particular intellectuals/theories of action?” While the notion of inputs and outputs suggest linearity, all three of these outputs recursively feed back to expand and deepen one’s political perspective. At this point, I will now describe how these inputs and outputs function.

Reflection. The practice of reflexivity is “the process of critical self-reflection on one’s biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences and an acknowledgement of the inquirer’s place in the setting, context and social phenomenon” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 136). I add to this definition the practice of being aware of, examining, and situating one’s privileges and intersecting oppressions within the context. I assert that reflexivity as a process can be operationalized into a school and teachers’ practice. A school can create the structural conditions to ensure that teachers regularly engage in the practice of reflexivity in settings where thought provoking questions, an anchor text or piece of information, and authentic dialog leads to reflexive journaling. That is, a school can create the opportunities for teachers to be reflexive. A school can also create the cultural conditions so that teachers see the practice and process as important
in helping them to actualize their own potential, whether it happens structurally in an organized context or not.

*Analysis of schooling and society.* Teachers emerging in their political perspectives learn to apply a discourse of critique as well as a discourse of possibility in order to engage in the ideological and political task of understanding, examining, and disrupting the ways that schools and society in general reproduce structures of domination and subordination that affect the lives of students from various class, gender, and ethnic groups. Having such an analysis and commitment towards transforming inequitable relations in schools assists in teachers developing their political perspectives. It affects how they view students. It affects what they do for students. It affects their hopes and dreams for their students over the long haul. Teachers’ work becomes situated in a bigger picture.

An analysis of schooling and society also influences one’s revolutionary aesthetic (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) in the way that his public life outside of school reflects a genuine commitment towards transforming inequitable and unequal conditions. That is, his commitment is reflected in how he lives, so that his students can see their own potential for their own revolutionary lives. The revolutionary aesthetic makes concrete the ways in which transformation is more than a theory or unit of study in the history classroom. It takes work. It can involve our interests, skills, and passions. And it can be a collective endeavor that requires struggle, but inevitably moves us in the direction of growth.

*Embrace of struggle and growth.* As teachers, we should all know by now that this work is hard. The material rewards are few. The available resources are scarce. The physical and emotional demands of the daily schedule are grueling. The opportunities for growth are often vague and unsystematic. Yet, there are numerous teachers demonstrating revolutionary love
(Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), Critical Hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), an ethic of risk (Beaubeof-LaFontant, 2002), and an ethic of care (Ladson-Billings, 1995) who are constantly pushing the envelope to what inspired and effective teaching and learning looks like. There are numerous teachers who believe that their own learning, growth, and progress are directly correlated to that of their students.

Clarity of purpose. Part of a teacher’s political perspective is the ability to develop and articulate a clarity of purpose. Teachers with clarity of purpose are able to articulate why they teach and towards what ends. Clarity of purpose is not static or dichotomous, where either one has it or does not. It evolves through continuously engaging in a practice of reflexivity, furthering one’s knowledge and analyses of schooling and society, and gaining more experiences that are fueled by an embrace of struggle and growth. As exemplified through the analysis of the data, teachers, whether novice or more experienced, could evolve in their clarity of purpose. For the most part, the foundation of values that underlie the clarity did not change. What did change was the precision of clarity that was inspired as a result of the experiences and insights gained throughout the year.

Clarity of practice. There are numerous pedagogical strategies available for teachers. There is no shortage of them. As a matter of fact, the list of strategies grows as teachers develop in experience and as experts and begin to be more creative about how to catalyze learning. What these expert teachers understand is why it is that those strategies are effective and in what context. However, one does not have to be an expert teacher to learn this basic idea -- understand the principles behind a pedagogical strategy, gain experience in applying it and seeing how it works in context, then one begins to learn how to adjust them for different contexts. In essence, we cannot continue to deintellectualize teachers, expecting them to teach as if it were
paint by numbers. We must instill a practice and ethic in teachers to deeply understand why, just as much as they should learn what and how.

*Clarity of alignment.* As clarity of purpose and clarity of practice get defined and refined by teachers, their political perspectives also continue to evolve and deepen. This can happen regardless of the school. What was unique at Eastside was the emerging robustness of its Values-Directed School Cohesion Container. Part of what made this container significant was the way that it sought to not only align teachers with the school, but also with each other. Clarity of alignment is the way that a teacher’s clarity of purpose and practice aligns with each other as well as within the setting. That is, how does a teacher’s clarity of purpose align with the vision, mission, values, and other philosophical frameworks of the school? How does a teacher’s clarity of practice align with the school’s pedagogical frameworks? How does both the clarity of purpose and practice align with those of the teacher’s colleagues? Clarity of alignment is also not a list of checks and balances. The school must have some level of organization and attempts at uniformity in order for there to be something for anyone to even align with.

Political perspective is not static. It is not whatever. It moves along a continuum that is unique to the individual, but can also be carefully guided. In a school focused on cohesion, every teacher’s political perspective must be able to move in such a way that deepens in alignment with the school. The relationship between teacher and school is symbiotic where they both deepen in alignment through an intentional and reflective process of working to manifest the school’s vision.

Political perspectives are not simply a static list of motivations that drive a teacher’s actions, commitments, and clarity to teaching within a community. They are complex, multilayered, fluid, dynamic, and evolving, whether for a teacher in her eighth year like Karla or
a teacher in his first year like Mark. Political perspectives can be cultivated. It is not “either one has it or one does not.” It is not whatever. In order for teacher development to be dangerous (Ladson-Billings, 1999), this must be a core belief. The school must have a Values-Directed School Cohesion Container that can facilitate this type of development. At the same time, the school must be aware and intention about what it is trying to facilitate its teachers toward. In the case of Eastside High, it sought to develop its teachers to become humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioners. The totality of these components comprised what I have termed, the “Politically Determined Pedagogue.”

* Cultivating the Politically Determined Pedagogue *

The fourth principle that emerged from the findings of this research is as follows: A School of Politically Determined Pedagogues can be developed through an intentionally designed system of interconnected cultural and structural conditions that value the expansive power and potential of both the individual and collective whole. The Politically Determined Pedagogue acknowledges that relevance is not enough. We must be focused downstream on our liberation, in addition to the more upstream areas of responsiveness and relevance. In order to not fall into the trap of being preoccupied with the conceptual to the neglect of the practical, I offer a framework to operationalize the components for developing Politically Determined Pedagogues. To do discuss this, I will focus on the most salient themes that surfaced from the data, which all sit at the intersection of culture and structure. I have the organized the framework in the model below to capture the components as well as illustrate relationships and interdependency.

*Figure 8. Developing politically determined pedagogues model.*
In this model, again, the use of the outer circle suggests containment. Within the outer circle, there are five layers that are guided and intersected by the cultural and structural conditions of the setting (i.e. the school). The first circle represents Political Perspectives, which I have already discussed at length and therefore will not provide much more explication in this subsection. What is key to mention, however, is how Political Perspectives fits into the model, which is at the center. This position suggests that Political Perspectives continually get influenced by many things, but also influences what teachers do. The Political Perspectives are central, because they are high leverage in affecting a teacher’s growth, particularly at a school such as Eastside High.

The second circle represents Theories of Action. Theories of action serve as a foundational source of philosophy, knowledge, and assumptions for the practices within an organization in order to move towards some desired result (City, Elmore, Fiorman, & Teitel,
2009). They are not to be confused with theories for action, or “technical instruments for change that ignored the necessity for a dialectical reflection on the everyday dynamics and problems of the oppressed within the context of radical social transformation” (Giroux, 1988, p. 118.). Theory does not dictate practice, but rather serves to mediate and be mediated by specific contexts and forms of experience from practice. In a school setting, a theory of action connects a strategy to the actions and relationships that are deemed critical to effective teaching and learning. Where is the school situated in terms of its philosophies of working in urban schooling? Working with non-dominant, school dependent youth? Pedagogy?

The third circle represents what I term, “the 5 R’s of Rigor, Relevance, Responsiveness, Real Talk, and Rising Up.” These govern what happens inside the classroom as well as outside. At structural and cultural levels, the 5 R’s are both learned by teachers as well as expected from teachers in how they educate their students. The 5 R’s involve traditional academics, socio-emotional development, and the revolutionary aesthetic.

The fourth circle involves what I call, “the Big Homies.” I do not know the origin of this term, which might possibly be localized to urban cities in California, but it is a term that carries much reverence and weight at least in the city where Eastside is located. It refers to someone well respected because of her authentic, relevant experiences, knowledge and wisdom, and mentorship with less experienced members of the community. She has already “put in work” in such a way that has built expertise and success. In the context of this research and a school in general, she is an instructional leader who has a proven and known track record of effective teaching, leading teachers, and creating tools and infrastructure to help make the job of teachers more sustainable.
The fifth and final circle is called, “Crew.” This pertains to the staff that works at the school. This component represents the cultural impact and influences that people have on one another. Concomitantly, the term “Crew” refers to individual and collective contributions. Everyone puts in work. No one sits back and stays in his own world. The goals and struggles are shared.

*Theories of action.* The nature of the content within the various theories of action analyzed in this study helped to lead towards the development of humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners towards a purpose-driven identity – teachers as Politically Determined Pedagogues. In this sense, the kinds of theories of action that cultivated such an identity not only had to inform a teacher’s purpose, but also the conditions that surrounded the development of a teacher’s dispositions, practices, and habits. This does not suggest that teachers are empty vessels who need to simply be trained. This goes back to the principle that there must be a firm belief from the school in the expansive pedagogical capacity of teachers. Having such a belief honors teachers as not only capable of doing great things, but also in the fact that they have already possess greatness inside. A school with the practice of articulating these types of theories of action for the multiple components of the school reminds teachers why they do what they do even when things become difficult. It also levels the playing field by equipping all teachers with a common knowledge base and language. This leveling particularly equips and empowers any novice teacher with being able to engage in certain discourses with more experienced teachers; maybe not with the same depth, but at least it offers equitable opportunities and potential for rich, intellectual dialog.

*Rigor, relevance, responsiveness, real talk, & rising up.* These 5 R’s of rigor, relevance, responsiveness, real talk, and rising up are in reference to the literal structures that guide what
teachers do and how they do them. Teachers learning these 5 R’s through the structures of the school help to develop their competence in manifesting the school’s vision, mission, and core values. Teachers should not merely be expected to do things. They should be provided with an architecture of support to do those things in systematic and consistent ways.

Rigor does not just refer to the expectation that students will be demonstrating High Intellectual Performance (Jackson, 2011) through engaging in High Operational Practices (Jackson, 2011). It means that a designed structure of support (and scaffolding) is included in helping to make rigor equitable and accessible by all students. Humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioners at Eastside learned how to build rigor through such structures that aimed towards providing for a consistent experience for students. For instance, teachers had (and continued to develop and refine) a codified scope and sequence with discrete learning targets and performance assessments. Certain instructional practices were also identified as strategies that all teachers should build into their regular repertoire.

Relevance refers to the assets, interests, connection to the cultural frames of reference, and perceived importance from the students. Teachers should learn how to provide a relevant curriculum in ways similar to the R of Rigor. That is, Rigor and Relevance should not be considered separate. The codified structures for supporting one should also support the other.

Responsiveness refers to the needs of the students. What structures are in place for teachers to know students well? What structures are in place for teachers to provide additional support for students when necessary? What structures help teachers to learn how to do all these things? Again, expecting responsiveness is one thing. Creating a designed structure of support for teachers to be responsive is another.
Real talk is in relation to the engagement in critical, warm demanding (Ware, 2006), organized, future-oriented dialog and discourses that not only raises consciousness and influences action in the world, but also for the individual. Real talk occurs when cultural conditions invite it. With Real talk, dialog is authentically pushes thought and action. This happens between students and staff, as well as amongst the staff.

Rising up creates the structured opportunities for teachers and students to be empowered, exhibit leadership, put into practice, and make public what they learn. Specifically for teachers, there must be a belief in their expansive pedagogical capacity in order for opportunities to be provided for the to Rise up. Rising up can be systematized in structural and cultural ways if there is a belief that all teachers can and should work together to improve the school in ways that extend beyond the classroom.

In essence, the 5 R’s contribute to the development of the Politically Determined Pedagogue, because they build teachers’ competencies through developing concrete skills. There must be carved out, sacred space for teachers to learn and do what is believed to be valuable. When there is no structural space to do something, then what is at risk is sustainability, consistency, and equity. It is unsustainable and inequitable to expect someone to do something without having the appropriate structure, training, support, and resources. Of course some individuals may still meet and even exceed particular expectations because of who they are, but then those individuals can potentially get perceived as being extraordinary. In this model to develop the Politically Determined Pedagogue, the endeavor is to have a designed structure of support for all teachers to be extraordinary. It must be not whatever.

The big homies. A Big Homie is a formal or informal leader who has a proven and known track record of effective teaching, leading/guiding teachers, and creating tools and
The Big Homie is also a courageous and influential leader and voice. She does not have to have the role of instructional leader. She could easily be that one teacher whom everyone knows holds it down, provokes thinking, and makes magic happen, both with students and with her colleagues. She inspires as well as expects everyone to be at his or her best. She actively builds learning-focused and trusting relationships (Lipton & Wellman, 2003) and knows how and when to differentiate her coaching stance between collaborative, consulting, and coaching. Let me also be clear on what the Big Homie is not. A Big Homie is not necessarily the instructional coach, department lead, counselor, principal. We would hope that those roles are filled by Big Homies, but that is not always the case. A Big Homie will not produce a formal evaluation of a brand new teacher in his first few months at school without having performed more formative coaching and general socio-emotional support. Even though brand new teachers are expected to not achieve high ratings on their first few evaluations, to conduct one without the preceding coaching and support would be demoralizing to a teacher. There is no competence and confidence building from such a high stakes practice. Even though I was the Co-Principal at Eastside for four years, I wish I had a Big Homie to support me and guide me, particularly in those first few years as a novice. There is so much I could have learned that would have expedited my growth in very necessary ways. Having a Big Homie means that she believes that she cannot afford for you to fail. She understands that you can and will stumble many times, but she cannot allow you to fail. She needs you to get very good, very fast.
The crew. I grew up in the 1980’s when Hip Hop as a cultural practice was reaching youth all across the nation as forms of creativity, resistance, agency, and community building. During the time, a lot of crews started to emerge: breakdancing crews, graffiti writing crews, emceeing crews, and DJing crews. As a teenager and by the time I was a young adult, I had opportunities to be in each of these types of crews. In addition to the Hip Hop culture being the thread that kept each type of crew in connection, what was also in common was the spirit of work and discipline. If one was in a crew, that was a big deal, because what came with such membership was the symbolic capital associated with being a public practitioner who had some degree of expertise in a craft. Whether one were twelve years old or twenty two years old, if one was in a crew, consistent and disciplined work was definitely put in to become proficient at a craft and making that proficiency known to the public. Everyone in a crew has to be disciplined to work together and get better as individuals and as a collective. Everyone in a crew works hard. Practice is just as important as performance. Crews were always focused on leaving a mark, so the only way to leave a profound mark was to practice often, practice hard, and help and push each other along the way.

At a school focused on developing the Politically Determined Pedagogue, there must be clear value placed on recognizing power and potential in order to work on the self, each other, and in solidarity towards something greater than any one individual. Potential requires the discipline to work hard in order to reach it. Value must also be placed on the process of reaching for that potential. There must be a structural design within the school to build crew amongst the new teachers as well as to build the crew through intentional learning spaces.

These spaces can be adapted for groups of people as well as individuals. As such, teachers’ development can be personalized by recognizing that they all have unique sets of
experiences, skills, dispositions, and ways of learning that are brought into the classroom and in interactions with others. From that recognition, it is then important to learn about that teacher and then provide, by design, ways for that teacher to receive personalized support.

Even though individuals have unique experiences, the culture of the Crew should recognize that commonality could still be derived from those experiences in a way where support and guidance could be provided, even if that looks like just listening or in collaboratively helping the teacher to problem solve in ways that are not judgmental.

Finally teachers must be viewed as intellectuals where their capacity for integrating thinking and practice is paramount to improving in their work. Crew must hold such a belief in order to be Crew. When we “Crew up,” we dignify each other’s capacity and capability to make the Crew stronger than any one individual. That recognition then comes with the support to help think through how to become better. From this perspective, the concept of Crew reframes individual and collective teacher identity. Teachers get brought into a struggle greater than any one person. Crew invokes a deeper internalization that the goals of the collective could be realized if individuals continually developed and improved.

While there is “no handbook” for developing the Politically Determined Pedagogue, I argue that there can be a systematic framework. In this chapter, I have examined how a system that focused on high leverage structural and cultural conditions and processes could develop such pedagogues. To do this, I first began by articulating the Values-Directed School Cohesion Container to establish the overall framework that could intentionally contain what happens within a school. From there, I identified a macro and microstructure for developing political perspectives. Such attention to political perspectives was intended to identify its significance as a high leverage area by which to focus development of teachers as humanizing, critically
conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. Finally, I introduced a model that described how these practitioners could be nurtured towards something aimed at the long haul – the Politically Determined Pedagogue.

The cohesive school that actively works to disrupt and transgress knowledge, practices, lives, and society recognizes that the journey towards political clarity can be systematized. Individual teachers have their own political perspectives that are not predetermined. Those political perspectives can be mobilized and guided towards developing teachers as Politically Determined Pedagogues. That process for developing Politically Determined Pedagogues, even without a handbook, can also be mobilized and guided. In all, the frameworks described in this chapter do not operate in isolation, nor are they linear in process. They are interdependent and while neat in picture, are usually messy in reality. As these frameworks are rooted in four general principles, they have the potential to continue to evolve and be refined in order to best determine how to equip teachers and schools to do the dangerous work necessary to confront and counter our dangerous times. With these frameworks, we have the agency to change the conditions of the ground by which we travel. The landscape of that dangerous ground then becomes fertile with possibility. The seeds of hope need only be nurtured and cultivated.
CHAPTER 8

It’s NOT Whatever: Towards a Cohesive Politically Determined School

On a hot summer day, a deer walks through the forest, thirsty and looking for a cool source of water. The trees offer little comfort in slowing down the growing thirst by the deer. Near exhaustion, the deer’s ears perk up to the sound of running water. She moves with more purpose towards the sound, eager and excited with spring to each step. “A river!” she gasps as she reaches the bank. She pauses for a bit looking over the conditions of the river and sees a fish swimming happily in the water. She calls down to the fish, “hey fish!” The fish looks up, “yeah deer?” The deer asks, “hey, how’s the water?” The fish, looking perplexed, responds, “what’s water?”

Like the fish, people can get so used to their surroundings and conditions that they do not even realize what they are in. Shakur (2001) reminds us that people can get used to anything. The less we think about our oppression, the more our tolerance for it grows and accept it as merely normal. It’s whatever.

Such a phenomena makes unnoticeable the everyday nuances of daily life. Through our immersion, our critical gaze, numbed from having any feelings of agency, looks more towards a distant, abstract horizon and away from our intimate internal and external environment and interactions. We say it’s whatever and we act accordingly.

The system of schooling is built upon a rigid foundation that has easily replicated itself for generations, leaving countless numbers of students and educators espousing naturalized axioms (Philip, 2011) that reflect their complacency like “if I could just reach one child,” or “these kids don’t want to learn,” or “you can’t make a horse drink – you could only lead him to

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water,” or “that’s how it’s always been done,” or even “it is what it is.” Hollywood would make us think that an extraordinary hero with a baseball bat or a karate kick is required to save the “dangerous minds.” This hegemonic discourse is numbing. We swim all day and never see the water. We do not feel its hold on us that embraces our skin, as if it is our skin itself. We do not hear the sound of its constant movement. We just swim all day, not even considering that change is possible.

When change is envisioned and people are willing to swim upstream, fighting the current, then what does it take to bring everyone else along? What does it take to arrive at a place where not only the water is made visible and apparent, the hope for changing the conditions becomes a true, concrete possibility and people get committed to and align themselves and everything they do towards (re)imagining how things like schooling or teacher development can occur?

Change the conditions, change the landscape. The hope to change the conditions and the landscape resides at Eastside High School. I cannot argue that it is beyond hope yet. I believe time will tell. The path is no doubt difficult. If it were easy, then everyone would be doing it. Eastside is still young, but the possibilities are there if they can stay aligned and focused on continuing to learn, evolving their practices along the way, and remaining steadfast and clear on their core beliefs and values.

To demonstrate this hope, I embarked on a process that identified research questions to investigate how the cultural and structural conditions Eastside High developed teachers as humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaged, and reflective practitioners. The research questions were used to designed a plan to collect and analyze data. The findings from that data surfaced three basic frameworks that were also generalized through four principles in order to encourage continued development.
To be fully transparent, I believe that even this study is still at the stage of invoking hope. Much has been learned, but there is still much more to learn and do. The Values-Directed School Cohesion Container, as the encompassing framework to sustain their vision, can be operationalized through the Cultivating Political Perspectives model as well as the Developing Politically Determined Pedagogues models. These models are interdependent upon each other, but not comprise a program that can be easily implemented in any urban setting. These models have surfaced from the data obtained during one school year from a small high school that has only been existence for eight years. While these models are certainly valuable for the school to continually improve and for other schools to be inspired by, there are four basic principles that have surfaced as enduring understandings. They are key in order to appropriately deepen and develop the models and practices further. The four principles are as follows,

Principle 1: School Cohesion is values-directed and can be contained within a robustly developed cultural & structural container.

Principle 2: There must be a belief that the expansive pedagogical power and potential in teachers at the school can be intentionally guided with courage and humanizing warm demander-ness if under the proper conditions.

Principle 3: Political Perspectives can intentionally evolve and be guided inwardly and outwardly by the cultural and structural conditions of the school.

Principle 4: A School of Politically Determined Pedagogues can be developed through an intentionally designed system of interconnected cultural and structural conditions that value the expansive power and potential of both the individual and collective whole.

From these principles, it is clear that alignment must be explicitly valued. School cohesion must be explicitly valued. Everything else will have limited effectiveness and
efficiency towards reaching potential without alignment and cohesion. The rigors and demands of the dynamic and complex school day make it easy for individuals in the school to get caught up in the daily grind. That is, it can be easy to lose sight of purpose, vision, mission, and values without the conditions and purveyors to always remind people of them. The conditions make it so that individuals, regardless of reaching Big Homie status or not, can remind themselves about purpose, vision, mission, and the core values most of the time. The purveyors, the Big Homies, have to remind everyone when everyone else forgets.

At Eastside, it has been important to constantly ask if behaviors and practices are humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective in ways that move towards self-actualization and self-determination. The answers were not always clear, but perhaps the bigger goals were to “live the questions” (Rilke, 1993) and to always say, “it’s not whatever.” Such a stance at least ensured movement towards possibilities. It ensured that complacency was not acceptable. It ensured that there would be intention behind the process of becoming.

By presenting this work as narratives of hope, by no means do I suggest that these learnings are simple, easy to implement, and free from challenge. To do so would be problematic and far from the case. Even my own journey as a critical participant researcher has been plagued with numerous challenges along the way. Not only in the past year during the official research study, but in all of my combined years, I have stumbled several times. I have engaged in practices that dehumanized my fellow peers. I have lost sight of hope. I have set unrealistic expectations that were lacking in sufficient structure. But I also never relented in trying to learn, trying to understand myself, trying to build capacity within the school and in teachers. That unrelenting nature also allowed me to work with others to determine ways to
make our vision equitably accessible and ultimately sustainable. That unrelenting nature allowed me to always remember that it is not whatever. We must believe that we can and that we must create the conditions for all our teachers to be successful, because we believe that we need our young people to be successful.

We are always being, but also in process of becoming. As this research illuminated how these specific teachers made sense of their process of becoming Politically Determined Pedagogues while at tension and/or in harmony with the structural and cultural conditions where they worked, we also caught a glimpse of the culture production of how they gained more awareness and insight into their emerging and evolving political perspectives as teachers in this world during their journey towards political clarity. This research aimed to support the nurturing humanizing, critically conscious, intellectually engaging, and reflective practitioners as not only effective teachers, but also school reformers who taught to transgress (Hooks, 1994).

Additionally, this research aimed to advance existing research and practices around teacher development targeted at the long haul. What was there to learn from these teachers that could help local teacher pipeline programs attract local candidates who possessed the necessary dispositions to succeed in an urban context? What could schools learn about how to better nurture and support them over the long haul? What was there to learn from the school about how it tried to set and maintain the structural and cultural conditions to nurture teachers for the long haul? What could teacher preparation programs, particularly those who claimed commitment to urban education, social justice, and/or equity, learn from such research? These unanswered questions are not important for the sake of advancing the literature and research base. They are important because of the potentiality of them advancing lives – the lives of both students in the public schools as well as the teachers that nurture them. These questions have the potentiality to
arrive at conclusions that interrupt the oppression and inequity that has built and reproduced the conditions inherent in these dangerous times. These unanswered questions have the potentiality to lead towards unquestioned answers. They are not whatever. As such, both the questions and answers are dangerous.
REFERENCES


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### APPENDIX 1

**Phase 2 Data Reduction Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Code</th>
<th>Sub Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background context</strong></td>
<td>1. The struggle is real</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. History with teaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. History with teacher training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. What I’m supposed to do</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Knowledge of self</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose and Alignment</strong></td>
<td>6. Common struggle</td>
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<td>7. Matched my fire</td>
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<td>8. Practice of freedom</td>
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<td>9. Warrior intellectual</td>
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<td>10. Misalignment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Conditions</strong></td>
<td>11. Big Homies</td>
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<td>12. In process of becoming</td>
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<td>13. This work is hard</td>
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<td>14. Not the only teacher with relevant stuff</td>
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<td>15. Why do you think that</td>
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<td>16. Crew</td>
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<td>17. Self care</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structural Conditions</strong></td>
<td>18. Targeted support</td>
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<td>19. I wish I had more training</td>
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<td>20. Clarity of expectations</td>
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<td>21. How does everything we do revolve around who we believe we are</td>
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<td>22. Curricular framework</td>
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<td>23. Revision vs creation</td>
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<td>24. Relevant &amp; responsive pedagogy</td>
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<td>25. Building and co-creating</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

*Political Perspectives Sub Codes*

| 1. Alignment with other teachers |
| 2. Alignment with the school |
| 3. Analysis of inequity |
| 4. Analysis of schooling |
| 5. Building coalition |
| 6. Clarity of practice |
| 7. Clarity of purpose |
| 8. Departmental clarity |
| 9. Identity politics |
| 10. Ideological baggage |
| 11. It’s hard |
| 12. Marginalized experiences with schooling |
| 13. Misaligned perspective |
| 14. Recognition of situatedness and/or positionality |
| 15. Recognized privilege |
| 16. Reflexivity |
| 17. Sociohistorical connection with students |