Critical Culturally Sustaining/ Revitalizing Pedagogy and Indigenous Education Sovereignty

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In this article, Teresa L. McCarty and Tiffany S. Lee present critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy as a necessary concept to understand and guide educational practices for Native American learners. Premising their discussion on the fundamental role of tribal sovereignty in Native American schooling, the authors underscore and extend lessons from Indigenous culturally based, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive schooling. Drawing on Paris's (2012) and Paris and Alim's (2014) notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), McCarty and Lee argue that given the current linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of Native American communities, CSP in these settings must also be understood as culturally revitalizing pedagogy. Using two ethnographic cases as their foundation, they explore what culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy (CSRP) looks like in these settings and consider its possibilities, tensions, and constraints. They highlight the ways in which implementing CSRP necessitates an "inward gaze" (Paris & Alim, 2014), whereby colonizing influences are confronted as a crucial component of language and culture reclamation. Based on this analysis, they advocate for community-based educational accountability that is rooted in Indigenous education sovereignty.

We begin with the premise that education for Native American students is unique in that it implicates not only issues of language, "race"/ethnicity, social class, and other forms of social difference, but also issues of tribal sovereignty: the right of a people to self-government, self-education, and self-determination, including the right to linguistic and cultural expression according to local languages and norms (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Wilkins & Lomawaima,

2001). Tribal sovereignty is inherent, predating the U.S. Constitution, but is also recognized within the Constitution and in treaties and case law. The cornerstone of the tribal-federal relationship is a legally and morally codified relationship of *trust responsibility* that is both voluntary and contractual, and that entails the "federal responsibility to protect or enhance tribal assets (including fiscal, natural, human, and cultural resources) through policy decisions and management actions" (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001, p. 65). Tribal sovereignty also inheres in international conventions that distinguish Indigenous peoples as *peoples* rather than populations or national minorities, a status that recognizes Indigenous rights to self-governance and to autochthonous lands and lifeways (International Labour Organisation, 1989). Thus, although many education issues facing Native Americans are similar to those of other minoritized communities, the experiences of Native American peoples have been and are profoundly shaped by a unique relationship with the federal government and by their status as tribal sovereigns. As Lomawaima (2000) writes, "Sovereignty is the bedrock upon which any and every discussion of [American] Indian reality today must be built" (p. 3).

For education researchers working in Native American settings, culturally based, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive schooling (all three terms are commonly used in the literature) have long been tied to affirmations of tribal sovereignty (Beaulieu, 2006; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). This has been contested ground—a "battle for power" (Lomawaima, 2000, p. 2)—as missionaries, federal employees within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and state departments of education have sought to determine curricula, pedagogy, and medium-of-instruction policies for Native American students. In this article we argue that tribal sovereignty must include education sovereignty. Regardless of whether schools operate on or off tribal lands, in the same way that schools are accountable to state and federal governments, so too are they accountable to the Native American nations whose children they serve.

With this as our anchoring premise, we take up Paris's (2012) and Paris and Alim's (2014) call for culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), an approach defined as having the "explicit goal [of] supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Building on foundational work on culturally responsive education by Cazden and Leggett (1978) and on Ladson-Billings's (1995a, 1995b) conception of culturally relevant pedagogy (see also Gay, 2010), Paris (2012) explains that CSP goes beyond being responsive or relevant to the cultural experiences of minoritized youth in that it "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95). Paris further explains that CSP democratizes schooling by "supporting both traditional and evolving ways of cultural connectedness for contemporary youth" (p. 95).

The notion of CSP affords the opportunity to extend this conversation to new realms. Today, Native communities are in a fight for cultural and linguistic survival in which Paris and Alim's (2014) question—"What are we seeking to sustain?"—takes on heightened meaning. As Brayboy (2005) notes, Indigenous peoples' desires for "tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification" (p. 429) are interlaced with ongoing legacies of colonization, ethnicide, and linguicide. Western schooling has been the crucible in which these contested desires have been molded, impacting Native peoples in ways that have separated their identities from their languages, lands, and worldviews (see Reyhner & Eder, 2004). As a consequence, we argue that in Native American contexts, CSP must be understood to include *culturally revitalizing pedagogy.*

We propose critical *culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy* (CSRP) as an approach designed to address the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of Native American schooling. We define this approach as having three components. First, as an expression of Indigenous education sovereignty, CSRP attends directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming legacies of colonization. Smith (2013) points out that this involves a "knowingness of the colonizer" as well as "a struggle for self-determination" (p. 8). Second, CSRP recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization. Since for many Indigenous communities this increasingly centers on the revitalization of vulnerable mother tongues, we focus on language education policy and practice. As Moll and Ruiz (2005) observe, a core element of educational sovereignty is "the extent to which communities feel themselves to be in control of their language" (p. 299). While language education in Indigenous settings is informed by international research and practice in bilingual education (e.g., García, 2009), by virtue of its revitalizing goals it requires novel approaches to second language learning. Finally, Indigenous CSRP recognizes the need for community-based accountability. Respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and the importance of caring relationships—what Brayboy and colleagues (2012, p. 436) call "the four Rs"—are fundamental to community-based accountability. To borrow from Brayboy et al.'s (2012, p. 435) discussion of critical Indigenous research methodologies, CSRP serves the needs of Indigenous communities as defined by those communities.

Our ethnographic work with Native American–serving schools in the U.S. Southwest serves as our lens into these processes. We begin with background information on the demographic, educational, and sociolinguistic context that frames the work of these schools. Then, using two case examples, we explore the ways in which educators employ CSRP to destabilize dominant policy discourses, even as these educators operate, in their words, "under the radar screen" of dominant-policy surveillance. We selected these cases to illuminate the complexities and contradictions of practicing CSRP in schools that

aim to exert educational control while confronting colonial influences embedded in curriculum, pedagogy, standards, policies, and Indigenous communities themselves. We conclude with a vision for a democratic policy orientation that resists reductive pedagogies and engages both the possibilities and the tensions within CSRP.

Three key questions guide our discussion:

- What does CSRP look like in practice?
- What are its possibilities, tensions, and challenges?
- How can community-based CSRP work in service to the goals of Indigenous education sovereignty, which include what Paris (2012) calls "the democratic project of schooling?" (p. 95)

Setting the Educational and Sociolinguistic Scene: A "Race Against Time"?

In 2012, 5.2 million people in the United States self-identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (1.7 percent of the enumerated population), and 1.2 million people self-identified as either Native Hawaiians or "Other Pacific Islanders" (.4 percent of the enumerated population) (Hixson, Hepler, & Kim, 2012; Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012). These figures represent 566 federally recognized tribes and 617 reservations and Alaska Native villages. However, the 2010 census also showed that 67–92 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives reside outside of tribally held lands (Norris et al., 2012, pp. 12–13). This demographic is significant because a growing number of Native American children attend off-reservation public schools.

The more than 700,000 American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students who attend K–12 schools in the United States are served by a plethora of school systems: federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools; tribal or community-controlled schools under BIE purview but operated by local Native school boards; state-supervised public schools, including charter schools; and private and parochial schools (National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008). Nearly 90 percent of Native American students attend public schools, and in more than half of these schools Native students constitute less than a quarter of total school enrollments (Brayboy, Faircloth, Lee, Maaka, & Richardson, forthcoming; Moran & Rampey, 2008). These public and often off-reservation schools are much less likely to have Native American teachers or teachers with Indigenous cultural competency (Moran & Rampey, 2008), which complicates but does not vitiate the possibilities for CSRP as an expression of Indigenous educational sovereignty.

Adding to the complexity of schooling for Native American learners is the diversity of Native American languages spoken—170, according to recent estimates (Siebens & Julian, 2011)—and the simultaneous threats to that diversity. In the 2010 census, only one in ten young people ages five to seventeen

reported speaking a Native American language (Siebens & Julian, 2011). The causes of a community-wide shift from an Indigenous or minoritized language to a dominant one are multiple, but in this case they are directly linked to federally attempted ethnicide and linguicide—what Kenyan literary scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009) describes as "conscious acts of language liquidation" (p. 17). Beginning in the 1800s and lasting well into the twentieth century, such policies were carried out through punitive English-only instruction in distant boarding schools (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). "While trust responsibility and sovereignty were supposed to be the guiding principles of Indian education," writes Brayboy (2005), "'appropriate' education was . . . that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo values and ways of communicating" (p. 437). These policies have had multigenerational impacts, one of which, say Hermes, Bang, and Marin (2012), is that many Native children and their families "have no choice about the language they use in everyday speech"; school, work, and "routine daily practices occur in the English domain" (p. 398). This places Indigenous communities in what some scholar-activists have called a "race against time," making language revitalization a paramount educational goal (Benally & Viri, 2005; Sims, 2005).

Native American communities have taken a variety of approaches to their language reclamation and revitalization efforts. For instance, many revitalization programs operate outside of schools—in family homes, neighborhoods, and communal settings (see Hermes et al., 2012; Hinton, 2013; Romero-Little, Ortiz, McCarty, & Chen, 2011; Warner, 1999). Many programs are situated within reservation settings, but as Hermes and King (2013) point out, "there is active demand for and interest in language revitalization" (p. 127) in diverse urban areas as well. Indeed, some of the most successful Native American language and culture revitalization programs (e.g., Hawaiian) have operated for decades in large urban settings. Each revitalization effort must be understood according to locally defined needs, goals, and available material and human resources. What is shared among these projects and their personnel is a strongly held sentiment that Indigenous languages constitute invaluable repositories of distinctive knowledges that children have a right to and need for full participation in their communities, and that "are central to self-determination and sovereignty" (Sims, 2005, p. 105). To explore these issues in greater depth, we turn now to our cases.

Introducing the Cases

We developed the two case studies in this section based on our individual research at each of these study sites. Both cases need to be understood in light of persistent disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes for Native American learners. Biennual national studies of American Indian and Alaska Native schooling continue to document ongoing and even widening

gaps between the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) performance of Native American students and their White mainstream peers (NCES, 2012). Similar disparities are found in graduation rates, postsecondary completion, and disproportionate representation in special education (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). This national database also documents limited instruction in Native language and culture content (NCES, 2012). Further, although Native students increasingly enter school speaking English as a first language, they often speak varieties of English influenced by their Native languages and are subjected to school labeling practices that stigmatize them as "limited English proficient" (McCarty, 2013).

Thus, despite the shift to English, Native students are not, as a group, experiencing greater success in school. "Schools are clearly not meeting the needs of Indigenous students," Castagno and Brayboy (2008) conclude, "and change is needed if we hope to see greater parity in these (and other) measures of academic achievement" (p. 942). The cases here represent schools and educators that have determinedly embarked on this path of needed change.

Since 2005, Tiffany Lee has been a researcher, coordinator, parent, and governing council member at the first case study site, the Native American Community Academy (NACA).[1] In this capacity she has observed and been involved in the successes and challenges of NACA to fulfill its mission while adhering to state mandates and regulations for operations. Her research at NACA took place between 2008 and 2010 and involved in-depth interviews, focus groups, and recorded daily observations of language teaching. Lee undertook one component of this research, and she and her colleagues undertook another as part of a larger statewide study of American Indian education (Jojola et al., 2011).

Between 2009 and 2011, Teresa McCarty conducted research at the second case study site, Puente de Hózhǫ́ (PdH). This research was part of a larger national study undertaken in response to Executive Order 13336, which called for research to evaluate promising practices for enhancing Native American students' academic achievement, including the role of Native languages and cultures in successful student outcomes (Brayboy, 2010). Data for the PdH study included extended ethnographic observations of classroom instruction and Native teachers' monthly curriculum meetings; individual and focus group interviews with key program personnel, parents, and youth; document analysis (e.g., school mission statements, teachers' lesson plans, and student writing samples); and photographs intended to capture how the local Native language and culture were represented in the visual environment of the school.[2]

In both cases, our methodology was ethnographic and praxis driven, with the specific intent of collaborating with local stakeholders in their efforts to effect positive change. As a guiding research ethic, we foregrounded community interests based on respect, relationship building, reciprocity, and accountability to participants' communities (Brayboy et al., 2012). We regularly shared qualitative data and our interpretations of them with program

participants. We also collected state-required achievement data to supplement our qualitative data.

NACA: Sustaining "the Seeds"

> Someone planted the seed for me to start learning my language, or something did that for me, and I'm excited to have the opportunity to try and do that for these students.
> —*Mr. Yuonihan, NACA Lakota language teacher*

The Native American Community Academy is a state-funded public charter school serving middle and high school students in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a city of approximately 500,000 in a state that is home to twenty-two sovereign Native American nations. Charter schools have played a growing role in Native peoples' efforts to gain control over their children's education (Ewing & Ferrick, 2012; Fenimore-Smith, 2009; Kana'iaupuni, 2008). NACA is an example of this trend as it embodies Indigenous education sovereignty and CSRP. The school's founders opted to propose NACA as a charter school because charter status afforded greater autonomy and flexibility than a typical public school and enabled the school to provide an academic focus tailored to community needs and interests. Although NACA gained some degree of control, it must still adhere to many state regulations, including state-determined monolingual norms monitored by English standardized tests. Schools like NACA offer state-mandated courses, including three years of math and two years of language, and their teachers must be state certified. The challenge for charter schools whose missions are connected to community, culture, and wellness is to implement an educational approach that simultaneously meets their own goals and the requirements of the state.

Approximately 5,500 Native American students are served by the Albuquerque public schools. These students represent Native nations within and outside of New Mexico. Additionally, many students are of mixed ethnic and racial heritage (e.g., Navajo/Cochiti Pueblo; Lakota/Anglo; Isleta Pueblo/Latino/a). The student body at NACA represents diversity within communities of color. Overall, NACA students come from sixty different Native nations and sixteen various non-Native ethnic and racial backgrounds. Ninety-five percent of the student body identifies as Native American (Anpao Duta Flying Earth, NACA associate executive director, personal communication, December 17, 2013). As more Native people move outside their Native nation's boundaries, this population of school-aged children continues to grow, making schools such as NACA particularly noteworthy sites to look for examples of CSRP and Native American educational sovereignty in action.

In the fall of 2006, NACA opened its doors to approximately sixty students in sixth and seventh grades. Today it serves approximately four hundred students in grades 6–12. With the goals of serving the local Native communities

and offering a unique approach to Indigenous education, the school integrates an academic curriculum, a wellness philosophy, and Native culture and language. NACA's mission is to provide a holistic or well-rounded education focused on "strengthening communities by developing strong leaders who are academically prepared, secure in their identity and healthy" (NACA, 2012a). The school's wellness emphasis follows Indigenous educational philosophies of holistic attention to students' intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development within a community and cultural context (Cajete, 2000).

In their effort to attend to the mission of the school, teachers and staff have identified core values related to the mission—respect, responsibility, community/service, culture, perseverance, and reflection—and expressed an expectation that students and staff will display behavior and attitudes that represent each core value. These core values reflect those held in NACA students' tribal communities. NACA staff members have designed activities to integrate those values into their curriculum and teaching methods. Such practices are intended to instill a foundation for students' cultural identity and are part of the implementation of CSRP. As one example, a community member, Carrie, discussed a weekly morning ritual that draws on Native songs and communal gathering practices to incorporate this custom into the school: "They gather in a circle on Monday mornings, and they begin with the drum. They actually sing together . . . And that's so important to have and so I think that . . . makes it feel like it's a community and it's unified."

The challenge for teaching values such as respect at NACA has been to confront generalizations and stereotypes of those values. Native American people have often been portrayed as one culture and one people (Diamond, 2010), essentializing the diverse beliefs and traditions practiced by Native peoples. NACA students come from diverse Indigenous and other ethnic backgrounds. Teaching to each respective student's community's values is unfeasible. Consequently, maintaining the integrity of new school-based rituals and traditions for exemplifying school values becomes a complex and constantly negotiated endeavor. In some cases, the teachers, staff, and parents utilize specific traditions of particular communities. In other instances, school-based practices are jointly created by teachers, students, and staff, who are mindful of avoiding any essentializing and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples. For example, the morning circle that Carrie described is an adapted practice based on traditions of many Native communities. The school's associate executive director discussed it in this way: "The morning circle is an extension of traditional protocols for openings/closings where blessings, songs, and information dissemination happens in a circle" (Anpao Duta Flying Earth, personal communication, December 11, 2013). CSRP at NACA requires careful attention to the diversity of Indigenous peoples and fostering practices that build and strengthen community, including the NACA community.

Building community through NACA's core values occurs in the classroom as well. Some teachers report using assessment practices that respond to a holis-

tic view of students and their performance as a way to create meaningful connections to the school's core values. Lakota language teacher Mr. Yuonihan describes assessing more than students' content knowledge. He also focuses on their development as caring and empathetic human beings and on the quality of relationships they have with one another. He said, "Another way that I evaluate if they're receiving some of the things that I'm teaching them is how they treat each other out here when they're not in class." He looks for his students to demonstrate respect, compassion, and helpful behavior with others, as these are also attributes associated with the way the Native language is used and how Native people treat one another. Likewise, he strives to create a reciprocal and respectful relationship with his students. He described how he explains this to his students:

> The relationship that we're gonna have in this classroom—I'm gonna treat you like one of my nieces or nephews, so that it does not end once we are out of this class. It does not end once you've graduated from NACA. We're always gonna have that relationship, and I expect you guys to acknowledge me and I will acknowledge you like that.

Indigenous languages are inseparable from this educational approach. Language is vital to cultural continuity and community sustainability because it embodies both everyday and sacred knowledge and is essential to ceremonial practices. Language is also significant for sustaining Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural identifications, spirituality, and connections to land (Benally & Viri, 2005; Benjamin, Pecos, & Romero, 1996). Additionally, strong Native language and culture programs are highly associated with ameliorating persistent educational inequities between Native students and their non-Native peers by enhancing education relevancy, family and community involvement, and cultural identity (Arviso & Holm, 2001; Lee, 2009, 2014; McCardle & Demmert, 2006a, 2006b; McCarty, 2012).

Reflecting students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, NACA offers three locally prevalent Native languages for middle and high school students: Navajo, Lakota, and Tiwa. While students want more local languages to be taught (such as Keres and Tewa, languages spoken in nearby Pueblo communities), NACA respects the sovereign authority of the local communities and takes seriously its commitment to community accountability. Hence, the school seeks permission from local communities to teach their languages. Keres, for example, has seven dialects representing seven different Pueblo nations. Teaching Keres involves collaborating and gaining permission from each of those communities.

Teaching Native languages to students is a culturally sustaining and revitalizing practice. NACA language teachers make clear the importance of having autonomy and flexibility for teaching cultural values that instill cultural identity through language-based methods. Mr. Awanyanke stated that these teachings "set a spark inside of [students] to have them want to learn more."

Teaching the language is also associated with creating a sense of belonging for students—a way to strengthen their cultural identities, pride, and knowledge of the cultural protocols associated with being Navajo or Lakota or Isleta (Tiwa language). As Navajo mentor teacher Ms. Begay noted, through this pedagogy educators are able to teach students

> the etiquette of when someone comes to visit you, how you tell them come in, *wóshdéé',* and they shake your hands, and you also address them by who they are to you. If it's an aunt, uncle, grandma, grandpa, then you always ask them to have a seat and offer them a drink and something to eat.

This aspect of teaching Native languages connects deeply to local cultural communities. The teachers engage in CSRP as they teach the protocols of using the language, rather than simply language mechanics, and emphasize the connections among language, culture, and identity. NACA teachers believe it is their responsibility to pass on the language. They share the view that schools must be able to accommodate, respect, and value this high level of community-oriented education. Ms. Tsosie, for instance, discussed the value of using Native-language immersion as a community-oriented and more natural process for learning Navajo: "When you say *immersion,* it ties back to your homeland, your environment. And it makes more sense when you do it in that type of a setting/environment, than, like, in a classroom."

Language and culture revitalization also requires adapting to nontraditional teaching methods and practices. For example, the Navajo language teachers use teacher/mentor pairing where two teachers co-instruct. They also utilize *Situational Navajo* teaching methods, which were developed specifically for language education and involve teachers in creating everyday situations (i.e., cooking, cleaning) to foster conversations in the language that require verb use and physical responses (Holm, Silentman, & Wallace, 2003). Both the Navajo and Lakota NACA teachers received training in these methods. Teaching Native languages is particularly challenging in a language immersion environment where students may not have strong Native-language support at home; as a consequence, when students do not comprehend what the teacher is saying, it is difficult to "stay in" the Native language. NACA teachers have found the teacher/mentor pairing extremely helpful in surmounting this challenge. As Ms. Tsosie commented, "I think it's nice if you co-teach with another teacher; it's so much easier just to stay in the language. But if it's just you, you feel like . . . I mean sometimes I feel like I'm talking to myself." Similarly, Ms. Begay believes collaborative language immersion teaching strengthens teachers' language abilities: "I think we can get frustrated easily, staying in the languages if you're all by yourself. But if you co-teach with someone, I think it's a little easier. At least you can bounce ideas off of one another."

One of the prime tensions in implementing CSRP at NACA is the need to address monolingual, monocultural norms embedded in standardized testing

while prioritizing community-based values (Paris & Alim, 2014). As is well documented in the literature, in the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), scores on English standardized tests can have life-altering consequences (Valenzuela, Prieto, & Hamilton, 2007). At NACA, students take the state-required courses in math, English reading and writing, science, and social studies. Teachers and administrators create a curriculum that integrates Native perspectives through these and other courses while attending to state standards. The Navajo Government course, for example, meets social studies requirements, the Native Literature course enhances reading and writing skills, and a required course on New Mexico history emphasizes Native people's experiences and perspectives.

School data indicate that NACA is making progress according to dominant-society standards: in 2011–2012, eighth graders demonstrated a 21 percent increase in their math scores, a 20 percent increase in reading scores, and a 9 percent increase in their writing scores from the previous year (NACA, 2012b). The student retention rate is above 95 percent (Kara Bobroff, NACA executive director, personal communication, July 29, 2012), and students in the first graduating class of 2012 were admitted into a multitude of Ivy League, private, and public universities (NACA, 2012c).

Measuring outcomes defined by its mission and community interests is a challenge for NACA. Standardized tests do not assess students' levels of wellness, the strength of their cultural identity, and their commitment to their communities. Additionally, the NACA community recognizes that the state does not use the school's goals to determine whether or not NACA remains open. The tension between community and dominant-policy goals is a source of continued debate and discussion among the NACA school community, and a topic of frequent discussion during professional development days (Kara Bobroff, NACA executive director, personal communication, April 24, 2013). When asked how NACA is doing at providing an Indigenous education as they define it, one staff member remarked,

> It's what we strive for, but I think we aren't there yet; too hard to figure out how to do both an Indigenous education and a college prep education, especially when they are at odds, like by defining students by test scores and grades. (NACA, 2013, p. 11)

In citing NACA as one of our cases, we recognize the perils of valorizing charter schools as a panacea and the urgent need for public reinvestment in underresourced noncharter public schools. In light of the achievement disparities for Native American students, and for Indigenous communities that have experienced centuries of educational malpractice, Native-operated charter schools represent *one* option for reversing that history (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). As we see in this case, schools such as NACA can open new spaces for experiential and collaborative teaching and learning by integrating Native American languages and knowledges throughout the curriculum and

by honoring community decision-making power in the languages taught at the school. This exemplifies community-based accountability. One crucial outcome at NACA has been the self-empowerment of teachers—their recognition and assertion of their inherent power as Indigenous education practitioners—as they make a difference in revitalizing Native languages through culturally sustaining practices. The significant factor here is that NACA honors teachers' ideas and supports strategies that often fall outside of mainstream schooling practices.

Puente de Hózhǫ: "Fighting for Our Kids"

> We're fighting for our kids to have the right to learn their language and culture!
>
> *—PdH teacher*

In Flagstaff, Arizona—a city of modest size near the western border of the Navajo Nation—a trilingual public magnet school, Puente de Hózhǫ, serves Native and non-Native students in grades K–5. Like New Mexico, Arizona is home to twenty-two Indigenous nations and is a state in which more than a quarter of the population is Latino/a. Unlike New Mexico, Arizona is one of thirty-one U.S. states with an English-only statute in place. The Arizona law requires that students identified as English language learners be instructed solely in English. PdH explicitly aims to provide a multilingual, multicultural alternative to state-level monolingual, monocultural policies.

The name Puente de Hózhǫ signals the school's vision to connect and valorize the three predominant ethnic and linguistic groups of the local community—Spanish and Mexican American traditions, Navajo (Diné) language and culture, and English and Anglo American traditions (Fillerup, 2011). As described by school founder Michael Fillerup (2005), in a district in which 26 percent of students are American Indian (primarily Navajo) and 21 percent are Latino/a, "local educators were searching for innovative ways to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable" equity gap experienced by poor children and children of color (p. 15).

Begun in 2001 as a kindergarten program housed in three vacant high school classrooms, PdH has grown into a separate public elementary school serving approximately 450 students. As a public magnet school, PdH enrolls students across a range of ethnic and social class backgrounds. Most of the school's approximately 120 Native American students, who comprise 27 percent of the school enrollment, are Navajo, although, like students at NACA, many come from racially and ethnically mixed family backgrounds. One bilingual teacher described this diversity:

> They are half Navajo/half White, half Navajo/half Hispanic, half Navajo/half Black, half Hopi/half Navajo. You know, they come in all kinds and it's life—it's real. That is how life is. That is the way society is. We are all intermixed and intermingled, and that is the way the real world is and that makes it beautiful.

Virtually all of the Native students at PdH speak English as their primary language. While many come from the local urban area and reservation border areas, Native teachers note that some come from the "heart of the [Navajo] reservation," seeking the "language-rich, Navajo-English instruction" that the school provides. As one recent graduate explained, "My parents really wanted me to learn Navajo so I can just know how it's spoken and talk to my grandmother and grandfather while they're still around, and the elders." Hence, the school's voluntary and enrichment-oriented program is designed to add an additional language and cultural perspective to students' existing cultural and communicative repertoires.

PdH students enroll in one of two programs: a conventional Spanish-English dual-language program for native English- and native Spanish-speaking students or a Navajo immersion program for English-dominant Native American students. In the Navajo-medium program, kindergartners receive approximately 80 percent of their instruction in Navajo, with English instructional time increased until a fifty-fifty balance is attained in grades 4 and 5.

Language often plays a different role with distinct meanings for members of various cultural communities. This reality is reflected in the school's language programming, which in turn reflects the expressed desires of Diné and Latino/a parents for a culturally sustaining and revitalizing educational alternative. As Fillerup (2011) explains, "Spanish-speaking parents wanted their children to not only learn English but to become literate in Spanish and continue to develop their Spanish language skills"; Diné parents "wanted their children to learn the Diné language" as a heritage (second) language (p. 148). Following a series of community meetings, the district established an experimental program designed to respond to the expressed needs and aspirations of its multi-ethnic constituency.

In practice, students in both programs interact regularly in art, physical education, music, and a host of school activities designed to cultivate their multilingual, multicultural competence, such as song, dance, and theatrical performances for the community and science and art fairs. As one PdH educator explained:

> We merge multiple worlds in our school. You have Navajo kids going to a [school] meeting and introducing themselves [in Navajo], but we also prepare them for the larger culture. Since we have native Spanish- and English-speaking students, they are all being prepared for a further world, the global world. We are preparing them for this. Many people live in the world and view it differently. They have many languages, and students don't feel threatened [about their own].

Like other Native American language revitalization efforts, PdH grows out of a larger Indigenous self-determination movement. In particular, its pedagogic approach has been influenced by Māori-medium schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Hawaiian-medium schooling in Hawai'i (Hill & May, 2011; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011; Wong, 2011). The goal has been to develop

an instructional program that "harmonizes without homogenizing"—a school "where each child's language and culture [are] regarded not as a problem to be solved but as an indispensable resource, the very heart and soul of the school itself" (Fillerup, 2008, para 3). In the Diné program, Navajo content and ways of knowing are integrated throughout the curriculum. "At Puente," Fillerup noted in an interview, "culture is a daily experience integrated throughout the day." This is signaled at the school entrance, where expansive student-created exterior wall murals depict the Navajo girls' puberty ceremony (*Kinaaldá*) and the red-rock canyon lands of *Diné Bikeyah* (Navajo Country). Throughout the school, the print environment displays vivid images of academic content in Navajo, Spanish, English, and other languages reflected in students' multicultural studies. As one educator noted, "There is a whole feeling about the place when you come here . . . It's a place that feels like home."

For many PdH educators, the approach to language and culture at the school, which we suggest exemplifies CSRP, opened "ideological and implementational space" (Hornberger, 2006) whereby their heritage language and culture could be reclaimed. One teacher reflected:

> I think working as a bilingual teacher here at PdH really opened my eyes to how important my language and culture are . . . I started to realize I have a beautiful culture . . . and I finally started to see the person that I am . . . and it just opened up a whole new world for me. And I think that is when I fell in love with my culture and my language.

Navajo culture is integrated into the school curriculum in several ways. Four overarching themes organize curriculum content: earth and sky, health, living things, and family and community (Fillerup, 2011). A Navajo teacher described what the family and community theme looked like in her classroom:

> [We] have monthly themes, we incorporate sciences . . . social studies . . . math . . . So our first month will be about . . . self-esteem—it is more of your clanship, your kinship, who you are, where you come from . . . "You are of the Diné [Navajo] people, you should be proud of who you are and how you present yourself as a Navajo person." That's all intertwined with [cultural] stories as well.

Another teacher stated:

> The culture is embedded in the social studies; we learn about the types of dwellings, and a big part of that is the *hooghan* [a traditional home and ceremonial dwelling] . . . and there are stories about it; what do you see in a *hooghan,* what does a *hooghan* look like . . . There are many activities that go along with the seasons . . . [and] Navajo songs.

During the period of study described here, the song *Shí Naashá*—literally "I Walk About" but translated culturally and historically by teachers as "I'm Alive"—was prominent in every classroom. The song is both a constant reminder and a commemoration of the Navajo people's survival and return to

Diné Bikéyah from a federal concentration camp where thousands were incarcerated and perished between 1863 and 1868. Teachers incorporate the song script into social studies and language arts lessons centered on Navajo history. Reflecting a critical pedagogical stance, one teacher remarked, "The song tells the story of how our people actually survived."

As this example suggests, PdH educators understand their work as countering what López (2008) calls the "subaltern" condition of Indigenous schooling, a reference to the repressive, compensatory focus of colonial language policies. This critical decolonizing stance also characterizes CSRP. Teachers speak of their practice as a reversal of past pedagogic practices, including their own. For example, when asked if her children spoke Navajo, one Navajo teacher explained her choice to socialize them in English, her second language: "When I was a young parent, I really didn't know what it meant . . . to value the language that you were raised in . . . we were just barely getting over the shame of being Native American . . . that we were minorities and we were not of value." PdH represents a significant change in this approach. One educator stated:

> This school is predicated on [the assumption] that learning more than one language is a *good* thing . . . We know English is the dominant language, but philosophically we believe that all three languages should be on equal terms . . . This is what we strive for.

"We have to tell the parents, this is not what they were used to in their own schooling," said another PdH educator.

PdH teachers' experiences testify to the painful self-critique out of which culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy is born. In their own schooling, all five Diné teachers in the study had experienced the forced severing of their heritage language. "I was raised during the time . . . when the Navajo language was suppressed," one teacher recalled. "You couldn't speak that in the boarding school." Another teacher related the experience of being mocked for using Navajo in school as a child: "So from then on I was like, okay, I'm just going to stop . . . using [Navajo] . . . because it's not something that [White teachers] want to hear." Yet another teacher related that she studied Spanish and French in high school, even though her school offered a Navajo-language elective: "I didn't even take Navajo because I didn't want people to know that I could speak Navajo."

Like parents at NACA, PdH parents want their children to do well in school by dominant-language and -culture standards. As one Diné teacher explained, "If we are only emphasizing bilingualism, that is just part of the picture and we are not doing our jobs. We want our kids to do well academically, too." This is also part of the school's efforts to be accountable to the community it serves. Given the present education policy environment, this means that the school must address high-stakes federal accountability mandates; keeping test scores "respectable," Fillerup (2005) observes, "keep[s]

the NCLB wolves from the door" and enables PdH educators to fulfill the school's mission (pp. 15, 16).

PdH has consistently met state and federal academic standards. In 2008, Native students at PdH surpassed their Native American peers in English mainstream programs by 14 percent and 21 percent in grades 3 and 4, respectively. In 2009, fifth-grade Native students outperformed their peers in English mainstream programs by 11 percent in reading and 12 percent in mathematics. Sixth-grade Native students outperformed their peers in English mainstream programs by 17 percent in mathematics, and PdH students "outperformed their English-only peers across all grade levels in writing" (Fillerup, 2011, p. 163). In recent years, PdH has ranked among the highest-performing schools in the district, surpassing schools serving more affluent, native English-speaking student populations (Michael Fillerup, personal communication, April 30, 2012). Importantly, and reflective of international research on second-language acquisition (Cummins, 2000; García, 2009; Holm, 2006; Hornberger & McKay, 2011; May, Hill, & Tiakawai, 2004), the students with the strongest performance on English assessments began attending the school in kindergarten and had the longest experience in the Navajo language and culture program.

But members of the PdH community view the school's impacts as extending well beyond the scores on English-language tests. As one teacher noted, "Hearing parents comment on how much their kids have learned or that their child may be the only one of all the cousins that [is] speaking to their grandparents [in Navajo]—this tells us that we are doing something [worthwhile]." "Most parents don't speak Navajo," another teacher explained, and "I may be *it,*" the only source for learning the Navajo language. "Parents trust us to teach their children the language that is so valuable to them," yet another teacher reflected; "the trust that they have in us to be able to teach their children . . . that is very valuable."

Like NACA, the case of PdH illuminates both the promise and the tensions in implementing CSRP in an off-reservation, public school setting. By offering two distinct but organizationally integrated bilingual education programs, PdH administrators and teachers make themselves accountable to the linguistically and culturally diverse community they serve. At the same time, the school affirms the sovereignty of the Native American nation in which a significant number of its students are enrolled citizens. PdH has been able to do this by using alternate institutional arrangements—in this case a voluntary public magnet school—and by adhering to state requirements for teacher certification, curriculum, and testing. Like NACA, the PdH community has managed to work around and through these systemic constraints by emphasizing high academic expectations, a robust content-rich curriculum, and children's heritage language and culture as foci and essential resources for learning.

Projecting an "Inward Gaze" and Problematizing Essentialisms

We have examined two ethnographic cases in an effort to illuminate the complex contours of CSRP. We recognize that each is a "special" case of public schooling; these are relatively small schools serving small minoritized student populations via charter and magnet structures. However, we propose that culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy requires precisely this kind of non-homogenizing attention to local communities' expressed interests, resources, and needs. This responsiveness exemplifies community-based accountability.

These cases offer a glimpse into CSRP in practice—its possibilities, contradictions, tensions, and challenges. In each case the desire to heal forced linguistic wounds and convey important cultural and linguistic knowledge to future generations anchors the school curriculum and pedagogy. This is a deeply felt responsibility on the part of these educators—in their words, a "tie back to [students'] homeland" and a bond of "trust that [parents] have in us to . . . teach their children." Sustaining linguistic and cultural continuity and building relationships are central CSRP goals, premised on respect and reciprocity. The specific strategies for accomplishing these goals are locally defined: teaching three Native languages at NACA and offering multiple strands of bilingual education for different groups of learners at PdH. The desire to support "both traditional and evolving ways of cultural connectedness" (Paris, 2012, p. 95) unites each school's efforts.

Through these cases, we also emphasize the importance of acknowledging the emotional dimensions inherent in these pedagogies. Love, loss, empathy, compassion, and pain run throughout teachers' accounts as they confront personal histories of linguistic shame and exclusion and attempt to reconcile those histories with the goals of emancipatory practice. As one PdH teacher shared, "For most of us, somewhere in our past we got beyond the shame and came to see our first language as a gift. I think that's why we're here."

Engaging the emotions that arise from and shape CSRP is integral to what Paris and Alim (2014) call an *inward gaze*—a loving but critical stance that counters colonization within and outside the school setting. Paris and Alim remind us of the importance of this work as they note that colonizing influences are often internalized by youth whose understanding of their heritage may be shaped by lenses other than their own. For example, in the statewide research project of which the NACA case study was part, one youth expressed dismay at not wanting to be regarded as a "fake Native" because of her limited Native-language abilities (Jojola et al., 2011). In her view, being Native required speaking her heritage language and knowing her people's history and culture. Similarly, in a recent large-scale study by McCarty and her colleagues (2013), youth with limited Native-language exposure expressed linguistic insecurity and concern for loss of identity; knowing the Indigenous language, said one youth, "is a big important part of my life if I'm going to be a Native" (p. 170).

The practice of CSRP has the potential to transform these expressions of Indigenous longing into powerful resources for language reclamation, thereby helping students connect meaningfully with their cultural communities (Lee, 2014; Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2014). Yet such expressions become problematic when they are essentialized or taken at face value. The youth statements above, for instance, may be uncritically interpreted as implying that one cannot be regarded as an "authentic" Native person without the ability to speak a Native language, or without knowledge of tribal history. Certainly these abilities and this knowledge are important goals, and we have sought to show how they might be achieved through the implementation of CSRP. Yet we have observed many Native youth whose indigeneity is dismissed or denigrated within the larger society and even within the youths' communities if they do not possess those skills or that knowledge. The discursive markers of "speaker/nonspeaker," so common in the scholarly literature, fortify these injustices, while pitting monolithic notions of urbanity and modernity against rurality and reservation life. From this view, one cannot be simultaneously "urban" and "Native" (Lee, 2009; Littlebear, 1999; Meek, 2010).

By employing a decolonizing critique to deconstruct essentialisms that reduce the multidimensionality of human experience, CSRP fosters and reflects an inward gaze. As Santee Sioux author, poet, activist, and artist John Trudell once proclaimed, Native people were human beings before they were "Indians," a term coined by lost European seafarers in search of the Indian subcontinent and often associated with romanticized, popular, stereotypical images of Native peoples (Diamond, 2010). As illuminated by the accounts presented here, an inward gaze confronts those practices as part of the language and culture reclamation project. Enos (2002) characterizes this as the exercise of "deep" sovereignty, in which Indigenous communities move to protect their core values, knowledges, and ways of being. The work under way at NACA and PdH emanates from such a perspective—a place of deep sovereignty, which "is where education is then grounded" (Enos, 2002, p. 9).

Critical CSRP, Community-Based Accountability, and Indigenous Educational Sovereignty

So how can CSRP work in service to the goals of Indigenous education sovereignty implied by Paris's (2012) conception of the "democratic project of schooling"? We note first that no sovereignty is totalizing or limitless; Indigenous educational sovereignty operates in constant interaction with the overlapping sovereignties of states, provinces, national governments, and a multitude of international entities (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). The efforts by NACA and PdH to balance state and federal requirements with accountability to local communities and Indigenous nations are evidence of this interaction. That these overlapping sovereignties and expectations are well understood by

Indigenous educators and parents is reflected in their concerns for high academic standards. As one PdH educator insisted, "The goal is that our students are achieving. We want them to know, 'You have all the right tools. You will come out of this [school] with a top-notch education. You can be the best of the best—you have what it takes.'"

In their meta-analysis of research on culturally responsive schooling, Brayboy and Castagno (2009) find "no evidence that [Native] parents and communities do not want their children to be able to read and write [in English] or do mathematics, science, etc." (p. 31). Instead, they note that parents rightly insist "that children's learning to 'do' school should not be an assimilative process" but "should happen by engaging culture" (p. 31). Similarly, in an examination of language and tribal sovereignty among the New Mexico Pueblos, Blum Martinez (2000) points out that "Native American parents want their children to do well in school," but this does not negate the fact that they "also recognize that their children will need to lead their communities" in the future (p. 217). This requires that children have access to local knowledges, including the language through which those knowledges are acquired. Schools can play a critical role in fostering these multiple community-desired competencies.

The educators in our two cases recognize that balancing academic, linguistic, and cultural interests requires direct accountability to Indigenous communities. Educators from PdH and NACA have even consulted each other for support and guidance in these efforts. After a recent visit to PdH by NACA teachers, for instance, NACA's executive director noted that one highlight of their visit was that it "confirms and served as an example that Native students are in great need of enriching and culturally relevant school models that support high academic performance and identity development" (Kara Bobroff, personal communication, November 11, 2013).

The approaches taken by NACA and PdH stand in contrast to the focus on high-stakes accountability in current federal education policy, which privileges a single monolingual and monocultural standard. As a consequence, CSRP can become a perilous balancing act that operates, in the words of one PdH educator, "under the radar screen" of state surveillance. As with many schools serving minoritized youth, this remains an unsettled and well-recognized tension that educators at these schools negotiate every day in ways that affirm the identities and strengths of their students. This emphasis places these schools on the frontlines of the fight for plurilingual and pluricultural education—defining features of "the democratic project of schooling."

The fight for plurilingual and pluricultural education has not yet been won, but that does not mean it should be abandoned. The testimony of Indigenous educators, parents, and youth demands relentless commitment to community-based accountability in support of such an approach. This is the heart of Indigenous education sovereignty, and, as we see in these cases, the promise of critical CSRP.

Notes

1. Each site gave us permission to use its actual name. All names of research participants are pseudonyms. Some names represent terms in the Native language that exemplify the character of the individual. For example, at NACA, Mr. Awanyanke can be translated simply as Mr. Protector, and Mr. Yuonihan as Mr. Respectful.
2. The national research project of which the Puente de Hózhó case study was part was led by Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy of Arizona State University and included Teresa McCarty along with Angelina Castagno, Amy Fann, Susan Faircloth, and Sharon Nelson-Barber as team members. The research team for the PdH portion of the larger study consisted of McCarty, Brayboy, and graduate assistants Erin Nolan and Kristin Silver.

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