Paint Palettes of Culture: Using Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in a Community-Based Arts Program

Praxis Project Thesis: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts — as part of the Community, Youth, and Education Studies Major at Clark University

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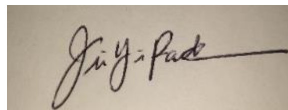

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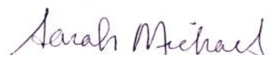

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ABSTRACT

"Core Stage" [pseudonym] is a youth-serving, community-based organization that works to make the arts accessible to urban youth of color and immigrant-origin youth. Core Stage is staffed by predominantly White college students who volunteer as art teachers and mentors. While partnerships between youth-serving organizations and colleges/universities can be beneficial for both parties, they can potentially be harmful for the youth participants. At Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in urban settings, the college-aged mentors' identities often do not reflect that of the students they work with. Core Stage's training for mentors focuses on discipline rather than asset-based relationship building or culturally sustaining curriculum. Interviews, surveys and observations showed that most college mentors focused on classroom management and discipline rather than engaging in elements of culturally sustaining art pedagogy. In my praxis project, I used the perspectives and voices of the youth participants to improve the training for college volunteers to take seriously issues of positionality and identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: THE PEOPLE AT THE CORE

Art is meant to be collaborative, as was this project. Whether it be visual art, music, theatre, or creative writing, creating good art is a process that brings to fruition multiple people's work and dedication. Before going further, I want to recognize those people who helped me create and complete this project and deserve recognition for their unrelenting support through the past year and a half of praxis work.

Thank you to the scholars whose work I have based my own work on, specifically Gloria Ladson-Billings and Django Paris. Though I do not know you, your work and theories have had a great impact.

My project itself would not have happened without Core Stage[1] I want to thank Jessica, the executive director, for meeting with me almost weekly to talk through ideas and always encouraging me to grow and try new things. I am thankful to have grown next to you for the past two years. I also want to thank my leadership team, for always listening to my seemingly crazy ideas, asking questions and challenging me.

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Thank you to my family -- especially my Mom and Dad for proofreading even if you didn't know what a theoretical framework is, and thank you Samson for always listening to my thoughts and ideas and proofreading the same sections multiple times. I am thankful for your love, support and great editing skills.

Lastly, my biggest thank you to the Clark volunteers that chose to trust me with their words and were enthusiastic about arts education and open minded. You *are* this work. Thank you for the long debriefs, the new ideas and the dedication you all showed. In the same vein, thank you to the eighteen young people in Core Stage's teen program. Thank you for your jokes, your dedication, ideas, and willingness to try new things and share your truths. You drove this project and deserve all the credit. I am proud of all of you and so grateful for you.

[1] Pseudonyms used in place of all names, including the organization in order to protect the privacy of participants.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

I always planned on starting this thesis with reflections from college volunteers about creating lessons that incorporated both culture and art -- after all, the first part of the title of this thesis is “paint pallets of culture.” But here’s the thing, I couldn’t find any. And therein lies the issue. Even after a lesson on the Lunar New Year where our middle school youth created lanterns out of li xi paper, played traditional games, and had a 20-minute conversation about different New Year’s traditions across the globe, the college volunteers’ reflections afterwards focused on food as a helpful incentive and positive disciplinary measure for students who are too chatty. The only time culture was brought up after this lesson was by one volunteer, Josh, who said: “I think that– like the teens were able to talk about their culture, which is really nice but I think having a short time for a one word check in and then moving on and not spend too long describing or [...] getting to the [art] activity is really important” (transcript from debrief). Why won’t White college volunteers talk about culture? Why is culture distinct from the art activity? What even is culture?

In the end it all leads back to where it started, to the training that by design was supposed to prepare college volunteers, most of whom are White, to work in an urban setting. The training was not preparing college volunteers to work with the students we work with or create relationships. Genesis[2], one of our students in the afterschool program in an interview said what I am trying to get across with eloquence: “Instead of just paying attention to all the other things, [volunteers] should pay attention to [students’] backgrounds and what they feel and what they want to talk about and tell people through art” (transcript from interview).

[2] Pseudonyms used in place of all names, including the organization in order to protect the privacy of participants.

The term “culture” will be, and already has been, used often in this paper. I recognize that it is a complex, multi-dimensional, constantly evolving concept, with personal connotations (it is used differently by different people). For that reason, I hesitate to impose one definition of “culture” on my readers. That said, I do want to emphasize that for me/this paper, culture extends beyond food, clothing and holidays but to all aspects of life and all interactions we have. Based on my lived experience and my reading of others' work on culture, I have come to the understanding that culture is your history, the way you interact with the world and the way you see the world over time rather than overnight, and thus hugely influenced by the "ways with words" and ways of interacting in the families, communities, and institutions you spend time in[3].

This paper will explore many different concepts, from culture and art in practice to the connection between power, control and uncertainty for White college students doing community work. It explores the many bumps I hit along the praxis and research process and how those eventually led to new action paths and questions. But before we get too far ahead of ourselves let's go back to the beginning, the problem.

The Problem

Core Stage, a nonprofit that works with youth to make art programs accessible, has a strong partnership with a local college, Clark University[4]. At the beginning of each semester, the leadership team for Core Stage and its partner club[5] hold a training for all interested college

[3] I can think of stories where I first began to think about culture (when I lived in Israel and had "culture class" on a very biased Israeli history, or dialogues I recall from an international peace camp for Israeli/Palestinians/Americans), but I think those only set a framework. This framework was one that was built on overtime by continued learning from those around me and academic texts such as Django Paris's work that eventually led to where I am, definition and understanding wise. Basically, my definition of culture is ever-growing; I can't pin down a time I deciphered that culture connects to everything.

[4] Clark University is a Predominantly White Institution located in the poorest quadrant of a city with a culturally and linguistically diverse population. The city is the second largest in New England and home to many immigrant families from around the world.

[5] Partner club refers to the undergraduate, student-led club at the University that works directly with Core Stage to recruit college students to volunteer and helps organize Core Stage’s programming.

students. My role within this partner club is as a co-founder and President, helping to organize programming and the volunteers and working with a team of three other undergraduate students and the Executive Director of Core Stage to run a predesigned training. This year we had our biggest number of volunteers. Over 45 undergraduate college students showed up for one or both of the trainings. Each training lasted two hours and covered the organization's values, rules, strategies for classroom management and discipline and the way that the five different afterschool programs logistically function, even finding the time to take a break to eat pizza. By the end of the first training everyone felt excited to start and teach art to youth in the area, but nobody talked about who we work with, who the students are. Sure, we talked about the age groups, but we never talked about the things that Genesis said are important: students' backgrounds; their identity, cultures, languages, or race; and we never talked about or even addressed our own positionality and how that affects the spaces we enter. Many of our volunteers are White and come from middle class families and suburban areas, with experiences working predominantly with White, middle class youth. The training never addressed the different experiences suburban and urban youth[6] have, leaving volunteers unprepared and with assumptions about the urban youth we work with. Without trying, we took on a colorblind perspective to training, never talking about positionality or privilege and not preparing volunteers to have conversations with youth about identity, culture and race[7]. This lack of preparation on our side led to unanswered questions, anxieties and assumptions about urban

[6] "Urban youth" is often used as a coded term. In the context of my paper I use it to refer to young people living in the city surrounding Clark that is racially, culturally, economically and linguistically diverse. But I also recognize that this term is problematic.

[7] For me, identity, culture and race are all interrelated, yet different. So, culture and race are not used synonymously within this paper. By this I mean race is different from culture though they are both important parts of identities to name and recognize. My thinking around race and culture and the different accompanying experiences are influenced by Django Paris's (2012) work.

youth and fear of talking about culture and race with students. The fear and unanswered questions led to volunteers feeling uncomfortable in the space, especially when youth talked about race and culture, causing many to do what anyone would do when they are in an uncomfortable situation: search for control. And in our case, this meant reverting to what was covered well in the training (discipline and classroom management tactics). This lack of conversation both in and out of training has larger repercussions and allows volunteers like myself in power to stay silent and not question our own privilege and positionality. This silence in turn contributes to the continuation of larger systems of oppression.

My praxis project aimed to use culturally sustaining pedagogy within the arts curriculum of Core Stage in order to actively sustain, embrace, and foster students' multiculturalism and multilingualism and use it as an asset to collective knowledge and learning within the classroom, rather than a deficit. The goal of my praxis was to go from a purely top-down "banking model of education" (Freire, 1973) where college volunteers teach the students (giving knowledge and techniques TO them), to one where teens have agency, and where concepts of creativity, culture and identity are explored together and dialogue is encouraged. One of my main goals of this thesis, though, is for you, the reader, to be able to understand and grapple with the things I have been grappling with and hopefully be able to take something from this. As a student, I always struggled with long readings with big words and fancy theories that weren't defined. I don't want this paper to be like that so let me define a few terms I use quite often before we get any further.

What Does That Even Mean?: Defining Central Concepts and Ideas

While I acknowledge that I can't define every word I am using, I have chosen a few key terms and concepts I feel are important to clarify before we go further. I am doing this to clarify

how and why these terms are used in my paper in order to avoid misreadings or confusion.

Below are terms I believe are important to foreground and define:

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy:

This term is used a lot within my project. It is the very base of my project. But what does it mean? Django Paris coined the term "culturally sustaining pedagogy" in 2012 as an alternative to Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of "culturally relevant pedagogy" which will be unpacked in my theoretical framework. Paris argued for the creation and shift towards culturally sustaining pedagogy based on the idea that "the terms [relevance and responsiveness] do not explicitly enough support the linguistic and cultural dexterity and plurality necessary for success and access in our demographically changing schools" (2012, p. 95). Paris proposed "culturally sustaining pedagogy" as an alternative that requires teachers to actively support and encourage youth to sustain the "cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 97). Its explicit goal is to support students' multiculturalism and multilingualism in practice in order to sustain, perpetuate and foster students' many identities and cultures within schooling itself (Paris, 2012).

Arts-Based Curriculum:

Within my praxis and research, I use the term "arts-based curriculum." I want to acknowledge that art can look like many different things. What is an arts-based curriculum at Core Stage and within the context of culturally sustaining pedagogy? When I refer to arts-based curriculum, I refer to a curriculum created with the main base of activities and tools of learning being through an art medium. While the lesson (and learning goals) could be about math or history, creativity and the arts (visual art, music, theatre, dance and creative writing) are the base resource used to learn it. Core Stage's curriculum is entirely arts-based with the intention to expose students to creativity and the arts as a form of expression.

Whiteness/Whiteness Theory

Sociologist Ruth Frankenberg (1993) defined the social phenomenon of Whiteness as three things: "First, Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which White people look at themselves and

others, and at society. And third, 'Whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1). Whiteness is the privilege to not have to talk or think about race. Race is not something White people think about when they see or interact with people. When a White person is trying to tell you about a person that you may know who is also White, they will usually first describe physical features as their hair or eye color. They usually won't start by saying, "They're White". Whiteness is the norm and the default identity of society. I use Whiteness and Whiteness Theory to frame the actions and reactions of White volunteers and unpack the fear and discomfort volunteers expressed in interviews about talking about race, culture and identity and why some see themselves as devoid of culture and race. I see Whiteness as an identity and a problem and Whiteness theory as the study of that, thus interconnected.

Agency

When I refer to agency, I refer to the ability to make your own decisions and be a voice in the conversation. In a way, it is a sense of being powerful and free, rather than be ignored, powerless, or told what to do. It is defined by a positive youth development model, a model that leadership at Core Stage utilizes within training as, "Youth perceive and have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes" (https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework). I aim for both college volunteers and youth to feel a sense of agency and that they have a say in what we do in programming and are able to be a voice in the conversation to make change. I believe that a feeling of agency between all parties (college volunteers, youth, leadership) leads directly to positive relationships, meaningful dialogue, and eventually change that benefits all parties, not just one. I use the term agency in many different contexts; youth agency, volunteers' agency, agency of leadership and also in a very different sense as in the nonprofit agency Core Stage.

Praxis Goal and Inquiries

This praxis project poses a lot of questions, many of which I can't answer fully. It has taken twists and turns and started in a different place from where it ended. While the project

began with the goal of attempting to add culturally sustaining pedagogy into Core Stage's curriculum I teach, I realized that due to the logistics and functioning of Core Stage, as well as my status as a graduating senior, this was not going to create change. I turned to taking volunteers' and students like Genesis' opinions to revise the training implemented each semester, and create a framework for college volunteers to create their own culturally sustaining arts-based curricula. But as I continued through the past year of research, I realized that this project and the issues I'm grappling with are much bigger than I originally thought. Towards the end of my project the goals changed from changing the large training to include conversations on asset-based relationship building and culture, identity and positionality of students and volunteers to creating more ongoing and intentional training sessions and conversations. It changed from trying to create a framework for culturally sustaining curricula to implementing a series of co-created and co-taught, or as one volunteer put it "co-participation" lessons between teens and volunteers. My last goal is creating a plan to restructure the undergraduate club to include more voices and opinions and planning for future years. My goals were as follows:

- Revise the main "big" training for volunteers to focus less on discipline and more on culture, race and positionality of volunteers and students, youth agency and asset-based relationship building.
- Create ongoing training on the above and other topics in order to create more conversations on Whiteness and privilege, and make sure volunteers are prepared to work with urban youth and have important conversations.
- Revise the method Core Stage uses for discipline, known as "3 strikes".

➢ Create a framework for culturally sustaining pedagogy for volunteers to utilize in curriculum development.

➢ Co-create and co-teach lessons based in art between students and volunteers as co-learners.

➢ Create a plan for future implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy and conversations and restructure the undergraduate organization to be more inclusive of diverse voices and different cultural clubs that better represent the students we work with.

In general, a lot of this project has been me trying to figure out how to use my positionality and privilege to start larger conversations about culture, identity, race and with my peers and teenage students using a culturally sustaining lens. It is me wrestling with what these conversations and culturally sustaining pedagogy can look like at Core Stage and how it can be incorporated into a curriculum that is created and taught by many different college students. With these revisions to the curriculum and the general structure of the club, I hoped to create a space more open to critical conversations and new forms of art and knowledge. Much of the current curriculum of Core Stage is taken from the internet and does not allow for students to give input and share their different perspectives on art and creativity. In a way, a lot of the curriculum and conversations happening, my own included, was providing diverse youth with art experiences that are intended for White middle-class students. This leads me to the four research questions that shape my project and data analysis.

➢ 1. How do college volunteers take up and respond to a training session aimed at interrogating and reimagining discipline?

- Do college volunteers shift their thinking around discipline? What does that shift look and sound like?

➢ 2. How do college volunteers in the program respond to the addition of critical and culturally sustaining conversations during programming?

- How do they engage with it? In what ways, if at all, do they address their own culture, identity and privileges before, during or after a lesson?

➢ 3. How do staff and leadership respond to implementing ongoing training that focuses on identity and positionality both of themselves and urban youth?

- Does it make a difference in the way the older youth are viewed?

➢ 4. In what ways, and to what extent does co-creating lessons with the older youth in the teen program lead to more of a sense of agency and better, more positive relationships with volunteers?

Considering the fact that I am not working with Core Stage forever, the question turned from 'How can I work to include more conversations about culture and identity?' to 'How can I work to push volunteers towards critical consciousness and conversations with youth on identity and culture?' Though difficult, these questions will be answered through continuing conversations, trial and error, work, and reflection and aided me in coming to understand what culturally sustaining pedagogy looks like in an afterschool arts space and how possible it is to implement for Core Stage. But what is Core Stage? Why did I do this project there?

2. CONTEXT: WHERE AND WHY?

Action Site: Core Stage

Core Stage was started in the summer of 2011 when a group of local artists identified a need for art programming that was cost free, fun and accessible to all youth in the area. The artists were responding to art programs being cut in local schools and extracurricular art options being expensive. When Core Stage first began its programming, it consisted of a one-week day camp in the summer with 40 kids from the community learning drama, dance, creative writing, music and visual art in the gymnasium of a small church. Soon after that first successful summer, the program officially became a non-profit organization in order to further achieve its goals. Since that first summer the program has grown exponentially, now providing six weeks of half-day programming in the summer, weekly after school programming at five different schools and a number of smaller events -- all on top of the original one-week program held at Clark University. Core Stage is run by a board of directors and an Executive Director, Jessica. Almost all the program volunteers and interns come from the local college and the partnership club Core Stage created with them in 2018. It is important to add that I was part of the team to start the partnership between the college and Core Stage and currently serve as President and a point leader helping to lead and organize the programs and events and coordinate and train college volunteers. As previously stated, college volunteers are required to attend a training at the beginning of each semester, meant to prepare volunteers for what they will be doing when doing art with local youth and how to handle situations or "misbehaviors" that may arise.

The mission statement has stayed mostly the same as it is now; "[To] empower youth by providing accessible arts programs to under-resourced communities." According to Jessica, "The mission statement wording has changed slightly, but the mission always is to ensure the [art]

programs are accessible and available for the communities who stand to benefit from them most, where affordable arts programs are lacking" (Interview with Jessica, 6:02-6:32, 6:43-7:09).

Core Stage serves youth who range from ages six to age seventeen. All programs are free for neighborhood residents who prove residency. The number of students[8] depends on the program, but the one-week, full day summer program remains the organization's biggest program with an average of 50 students. About 85% of students involved in the organization's 2018 programs were students of color. Around 60% of students are Latino/a/x, many who are from Spanish-speaking households, while conversely, a majority of the interns and volunteers are White, English-speaking college students, myself included. Most volunteers come from suburban areas and are majority White women interested in education. Over half are first-years or sophomores at the university, meaning not only are they new to the school, but are new to the city and "urban environment".

My project was enacted within Core Stage's weekly Friday teen program at a local middle school. It is our biggest afterschool program and seen by many volunteers to be the hardest and most chaotic program to work with. This is partially because Core Stage is part of the school district's larger afterschool programming, meaning that many of the youth in the program did not choose Core Stage as their preferred activity. The overarching afterschool program is new. Each Friday college volunteers spend the first hour of programming in the elementary school doing art with the younger siblings of those in the teen program. During this time the teens are doing another activity, usually cooking or working with their teacher on schoolwork. The latter 45 minutes are spent with older youth in the middle school. The youth in this program range from twelve to fifteen years old, though many are in the younger part of that

[8] In this paper, the words "youth" and "students" are used interchangeably in referring to the young people Core Stage works with.

age range. This Core Stage program was created at the beginning of this year and has an average of eighteen students and twelve volunteers. That said, each week the number of students we had fluctuated. There were weeks when eleven teens showed up and there were weeks where twenty-six teens showed up. We were never informed of how many students to expect, though it tended to be the same teens each week. We also always had two middle school teachers to help with any problems we had, though we found a bulk of our issues, especially towards the end of this project, were with the teachers overstepping, taking students out of the program for perceived misbehavior and contradicting volunteers. Core Stage was simultaneously facilitated and constrained by the larger setting and program.

The volunteers for Friday's programming fit Core Stages' norm: predominantly White and female from middle class backgrounds and interested in art or education. The youth in this program were predominantly students of color, most Latino/a/x and spoke Spanish or another language at home. Only one volunteer spoke Spanish. Volunteers voiced in interviews that the Friday program is the most chaotic and hardest to work in for a range of reasons, including teens' energy levels, age, and assumptions about urban youth as "troubled" or "less fortunate and lacking resources" (transcripts from interviews with college volunteers).

Volunteers are, for the most part, undergraduates at Clark, located nearby. Clark, as mentioned earlier, is a private, predominantly White, liberal arts university, with a focus on positive change and engagement in the community and proudly features many incredibly engaged and busy students. I feel that it is important to note that within many classes, especially education classes, conversations on race, identity, culture and privilege happen often, so why don't they transfer to other spaces? Where is the disconnect?

Volunteers for Core Stage are involved for many different reasons; some as a class requirement, some due to their passion for art and some out of a want to "help these kids".

Volunteers that attended the first big training for Core Stage.

Each week, college volunteers created and implemented their own curriculum, with me and other leadership stepping in when needed. For the elementary program, activities were varied, with some being based in visual art, some in drama, and some in music and some in dance. Almost every week a volunteer taught the lesson. For the middle school program, the same cannot be said. Drama was done almost every week with them at the beginning as no volunteers wanted to teach other art-based lessons, and it was seen as the most engaging activity for the youth's "high energy". Towards the end, lessons became more varied to include some visual art and music. After each session with the youth, volunteers met and took ten to twenty

minutes to “debrief”. The point leader for the program asked, “What went well in ___ program?”; “What can be improved?”; “Any other thoughts?” Much of what can be improved has been focused on handling the teens’ energy and “chattiness,” something that is often dealt with by using Core Stage’s disciplinary policy. The policy, known as the “3 Strike Policy,” basically states that if a student is misbehaving (defined in training as not participating, talking out of line, not engaging in lesson etc.), then they get a warning. If they continue or do not listen, they will get a strike. The process repeats until the student either stops the behavior in question or has three strikes, at which point they are “out” and asked to not return to the program for at least a week. This policy was utilized in all programs and began early in Core Stage’s existence. Though strikes were given to students (often the same students) nearly every week, it was extremely rare that a student would get up to three strikes.

This was the basis of conversation in trainings and debriefs, never talking about culture, race, identity or positionality of either volunteers or youth. But, with the context of the organization and the Whiteness and positionality of many volunteers in mind, it was and will always be imperative that the leadership, volunteers and myself all address and critically engage with our own positionality and identity as well as that of the youth we work with. However, it is not only on the volunteers. It’s on me and the leadership team to support the volunteers to facilitate these conversations. As leadership for the club and organization we must critically engage and think about our positionality and guide volunteers in doing the same in order to not fall into a culture of silence and avoid talking about it. We must care and put in the work to ask students questions beyond, “What is your favorite color?” and learn about the different identities, cultures and history our students bring to the space. Purposefully putting in effort to want to learn more and show we care is an important step in creating relationships between students and

volunteers. It is also imperative to creating a space where the teens and volunteers alike feel comfortable opening up, asking the hard questions and unpacking their own and others' identities, cultures and languages (Goldenberg 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Now that a bit more is known about Core Stage and its volunteers, the question becomes who am *I* in this work? Why am *I* doing this project?

Positionality and Identity

As previously stated, and will be said many more times, being critical and aware of my own identity and positionality is extremely important, especially within the context of this project. I come from a background of privilege as a White woman from a middle-class, suburban background. Through the process I found myself questioning whether this work is something *I* should be trying to do. However, the same question can be reversed; Who am I not to be doing this work?

Youth workers and educators need to be (or working towards being) culturally competent and critically aware of their own positionality and identity in order to best support the differing needs and identities of the youth they work with (Paris, 2012). I am a White woman and cannot teach about the experiences of people of color. However, that can’t be an excuse to not talk about race and privilege. It is not people of color's job to educate White people (DiAngelo, 2015; Potapchuk, 2005). By not actively putting in the work to recognize students’ cultures and identities and become critically aware of your own, it further enforces the idea that all students learn the same way and have access to the same materials and knowledge. This is harmful for any student who is not in the dominant demographic (Delpit, 1995). Actively working against this ideology was especially important for me and my work with Core Stage. As a White, middle class woman I am automatically afforded the kinds of social capital valued by dominant society,

as well as access to normative knowledge and resources. I am claiming that the youth in the Core Stage program also come in with their culturally defined social capital, and access to community and culturally rooted knowledge and resources that are incredibly important.

However, I did not come into Clark with this mindset. Reflecting back, I think I came in with a similar mindset I have observed in many of the volunteers; the idea that we should be focusing on our similarities rather than differences. It wasn't until I started education courses that actually had dialogues about race that I realized this colorblind mindset was a privileged one. I had the power to stay silent and not question my own privilege and positionality. I began to think more about this concept and as I took more classes, did more readings, conversed and asked more questions, I became more aware of my own Whiteness and the privileges that Whiteness affords me and how it affects the spaces I enter. This led me to take a more critical look at everything, but with a focus on the curriculum I taught at Core Stage and the training I was implementing. Were they actually effective and accessible to students or were they just providing students with art experiences intended for middle class students?

I need to constantly interrogate my own assumptions and check to make sure I am always open to making mistakes, listening and learning. I needed to learn about the volunteers I worked with and the students, their pasts, cultures, family and what is important to them. I needed to ensure I was encouraging and supporting college volunteers in doing this as well. I believe it is more than just acknowledging differences, but rather it is actively inquiring and wanting to learn more about students and what is central to their identity that shows care, which leads to meaningful relationships. I wanted to lead by example, using my own Jewish and Israeli culture, language, and family traditions to kickstart conversations and encourage volunteers to see culture and identity as assets, not obstacles that should be avoided or feared. Another reason I chose to

lead by example with conversations on identity and culture is that within Core Stage I have noticed that students, regardless of age or activity, are more likely to participate and open up if the college students do as well. As Ladson-Billings points out: stories, especially personal stories, are powerful and can actively work against constructed realities that rationalize oppression. (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Within Core Stage I am positioned as an insider. I began working with Core Stage two years ago when I was one of two drama teachers for the summer programs. Since then I have taught a few classes during the teen program, gone to some teen open mic nights, but mostly helped run the programs at the different schools and supported volunteers. Occasionally I would step in to teach the teen program when nobody else volunteered. Most of the students in the weekly teen program did not have previous involvement in Core Stage and did not know me or the organization. However, since I taught drama and wore a Core Stage shirt, I was seen more as an authoritative figure, interconnected with the executive director and the overall administration of the program. This may have made it harder to get students and volunteers to fully open up and be critical with me in interviews and feel like they can be honest and critical of the activities and program as a whole. Regardless of how many times I told students and volunteers that what they said would not be connected to their name and would not change how I feel about them, being critical of a program you are a part of to someone who is an authority figure is not an easy task and not something everyone is comfortable doing.

Leading a group of students in a lesson on self-portraits and monologues my first summer with Core Stage.

Within Core Stage I was not only in a position of power as a leader. I am also the president of the undergraduate club. As an insider working with other insiders, (leadership team) I needed to be sure to follow the advice of Herr and Anderson and work collaboratively with youth and the community to create culturally sustaining curriculum that benefited youth as well as the organization and encouraged youth agency and positive relationships between students and volunteers (Herr & Anderson, 2005). While being an insider meant I was familiar with the program and comfortable in my role, I had to continue to be critical of my own teaching and interactions; where I stepped back and where I stepped up to lead and how my identity, positionality and culture affected how I took space and those around me.

However, within the Friday program I came in as an outsider. Out of all of the students, only one knew me from past programming. I also was an outsider in terms of culture, race, language and identity as a White Jewish girl from Maine who doesn't speak much Spanish. Interrogating my own positionality and identity led me to see a disconnect between our predominantly White volunteer base and the youth we work with who are predominantly students of color. By extension, this helped me see that race, culture, positionality and privilege was something nobody was talking about which was creating larger issues and perpetuating a system of oppression that thrives off of silence. It was this realization that led me to the framework and theories that shaped this project and work.

3. WHAT IS THIS WORK BASED ON?: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I describe the theories that first shaped my thinking around culturally sustaining art and how that theory and practice eventually led me to another, Whiteness theory. My goal in this section is to explain what theories guided my actions, data analysis, and the ideas and assumptions I brought to Core Stage and this project. Here I have combined my theoretical framework with my literature review. I did this because I believe that in terms of this project, the two are intertwined. It was the pivotal literature on theories of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and Whiteness theory that shaped my lenses and frameworks at the start of this project and it was literature on how CSP and Whiteness theory are used *in practice* that shaped the way I conceptualized, and reconceptualized my action steps in the context of Core Stage. My framework is also made up of my own personal knowledge and thinking about culture and identity, integrated with knowledge and literature from others around Whiteness and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Together these provide me with the framework to make sense of my praxis at Core Stage.

When I began this project, I planned to create and implement an arts-based curriculum based in culture and identity. I made the mistake of beginning my research with the broadest search terms possible: "culture and education." As my praxis became more specific, so did my search terms, which led me to discover the pivotal theories and framework of Django Paris (2012) on culturally sustaining pedagogy (referred to as CSP). However, CSP (in Paris' work) did not include the possibility of art as a tool or art as central to culturally sustaining curricula outside traditional class spaces. So, a JSTOR search of peer reviewed pieces on "culturally sustaining art education" from the last ten years (to include early applications of CSP) helped me

find practices and applications of Paris's theory in art (see Acuff, 2018; Buffington, 2019; Laman, Davis, & Henderson, 2018). By utilizing theirs and others' suggestions, I created a base of what culturally sustaining art could look like in practice. However, as time went on, I wondered if my curriculum would really improve the space since I was graduating after this project After reading and speaking to a colleague who completed similar work at the university, Nia Slater-Bookhart, I decided to instead focus on the volunteers; the college students who will be doing this work in the years to come. My project and its goals shifted based on the need to address the fact that we, the volunteers at Core Stage, are majority White and working with majority students of color -- something that is rarely addressed (but as an exception, see Slater-Bookhart, 2019). I wanted to help volunteers recognize the dangers of not talking about identity, culture and race and help them promote culturally sustaining pedagogy as part of their own curriculum. With this shift in focus my search terms also shifted to a variation of, "college students, race and culture, community-based work." I did the same process as I had done with CSP and art and examined literature on Whiteness, Whiteness theory, college students unpacking privilege, identity and power within college courses and community work (see Álvarez, 2018; Endres & Gould, 2009; Green, 2003; Martin & Davis, 2001).

This section of my paper, which mirrors my process of finding literature, is split into three parts: culturally sustaining pedagogy, culturally sustaining art in practice, and Whiteness theory. The first focuses on the theories of culturally sustaining pedagogy, expanding on what I said in Section 1.2. - *What Does That Even Mean?: Defining Central Concepts and Ideas*. The second focuses on the actual process and application of culturally sustaining arts curriculum; and the third is on having conversations about culture, race, power and identity with White college volunteers and youth.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

For the sake of clarity, I want to deepen my explanation of the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, as well as cover how it came to be. CSP builds on and extends Gloria Ladson-Billings theory of "culturally relevant pedagogy" (1995). Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is a stance and approach to teaching that utilizes students' cultures as tools to teach the school curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRP is used by educators with the goal of relating to students' communities, cultures and experiences in order to connect it back and effectively teach dominant, mainstream school curriculum. It is also meant to support students in acquiring and developing a critical consciousness (an awareness of race, identity and power) (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The goal of this pedagogy is to bridge the gap by utilizing students' cultures and home experiences as learning tools and activities. However, Paris (2012) questioned if culturally relevant pedagogy goes far enough in orienting and maintaining students' different identities within this increasingly multiethnic and multilingual society, and thus offered a new term: culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). CSP's explicit goal is to support student's multiculturalism and multilingualism in practice in order to sustain, perpetuate, and foster students' many identities and cultures within schooling itself (Paris, 2012). CSP requires educators to actively support and encourage young people to sustain the "cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris, p. 97). It sees students' "linguistic and cultural dexterity and plurality" as more than just relevant, but necessary for students' success and access in U.S schools that are now more diverse than ever before (Paris, p. 95).

For a while I wrestled with which term to use; culturally relevant or culturally sustaining. While culturally relevant is the term that is often used in scholarly work and more widely known

and accepted, I agreed with Paris (and Ladson-Billings in her 2014 article), that the term relevant does not go far enough (Paris, 2012). I decided that within the context of my project, culturally sustaining pedagogy better fit what I was trying to do. I believe culturally sustaining pedagogy needs to be an explicit and intentional effort, with the overarching goal of challenging, supporting and advancing students, especially students of color, in their exploration and sustaining of their own and others' culture and identity. I offer my own definition, heavily influenced by that of Paris (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy intentionally uses culture and language within educational spaces to actively sustain students' cultures, identities and consciousness and challenge the monocultural and monolinguistic norms of many educational policies (reified in the No Child Left Behind era, amplified under Arnie Duncan and further heightened within the Trump administration), while still offering access to dominant ideas of knowledge.

I am theorizing culture and identity, the exploration and learning of one's own and others' cultures, race, languages and identity, as well as power. I also am theorizing relationship building -- something that is not explicitly explored by Paris within the context of culturally sustaining pedagogy, but something I believe is central to fostering a space where culturally sustaining pedagogy and conversations can happen. Think about it, if you go into a space and you don't know anyone or feel comfortable or trust anyone, you probably will feel more comfortable having conversations about the weather rather than culturally sustaining conversations about your identity, culture, race, language, power, privilege, etc. This is because of trust. If you trust the people you're around, if you're ok with making mistakes and stepping out of your "comfort zone," you will be more willing to engage in more substantive conversations. As I see it, growth comes from stepping outside your comfort zone -- but, you can

only do that with the support and reassurance of trusting, supportive relationships. I believe that creating understanding and asset-based relationships between myself and volunteers, myself and the youth, and the youth and volunteers is central and important to theorize and explore further as a first step for turning theory into practice.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in Practice – Art

So now that we know what culturally sustaining pedagogy is, how does it relate to art? Are art education spaces more open to and enabling of culturally sustaining pedagogy? Paris and Ladson-Billing do not explore the possibility and subsequent benefit of arts education within culturally sustaining pedagogy. But others have. I found several different studies that focus on practices and application of culturally relevant or sustaining pedagogy and arts education which have influenced my praxis.

Many different scholars and teachers (see Acuff, 2018; Buffington, 2019; Desai, 2010) have emphasized the importance of bringing CSP/CRP into art classrooms offered different suggestions and strategies, both big and small, to combine the two in meaningful, substantive ways. On a seemingly modest scale, it can start with the physical space and what students see when they walk in. Reflecting on my own schooling experience, the art classrooms I entered often reflected the status quo. “When I visit classrooms, I see posters, visuals, table/group names, and projects that reflect White, male, heterosexual, European artists, and “multicultural” projects are usually based on shallow stereotypical understandings of culture” (Buffington, 2019, p. 20). An art classroom that disrupts the status quo and utilizes CSP would have posters from artists of color, women, LGBTQ+ and international artists that challenge the norm, and use multicultural art projects that disrupt the status quo by focusing on language, liberation, cultures and history, and reflect the students in the class. “These reflections will give a sense of how welcoming and

diverse the educators' curricular choices and classrooms are. Further, although teaching about diverse artists is a good starting point, overtly addressing artists' race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, et cetera is a crucial task for educators" (Buffington, 2019, p. 24). Rather than just have posters up representing diverse artists, culturally sustaining educators must also go the extra step and name race, culture, gender, etc. in order to end the silence around race and identity that continue to perpetuate systems of oppression.

Buffington's (2019) study pointed out that many art teachers use the internet to find lesson plans, but when you search "multicultural art projects" the results are mostly surface level and don't address the history or intersections of different cultures and identities. She used an example of Native American culture being conflated to dream catchers and feathers. In my elementary school I remember doing a unit in art class on African art and culture. The projects we did almost always included paint, geometric shapes, craft feathers and mask making. Like with Buffington's example, this not only ignores the history and significance of African cultures and cultural imagery but lumps an entire continent filled with many cultures, countries, languages and practices into one category and cultural tradition of masks. These examples are tangible reasons why culture and identity have a place in all spaces and the potential dangers of not recognizing your own positionality and bias and, by default, simplifying and othering rather than sustaining students' cultures in the art classroom.

Buffington outlines the differences between CRP and CSP in art settings. While CRP utilizes storytelling and narrative with the purpose of highlighting alternate understandings and dismantling master narratives, CSP recognizes cultural plurality, the idea that many youth come to art spaces (and all spaces) with multiple cultures and identities, and encourages that plurality and hybridity by creating projects incorporating it. Buffington ends the article by offering

different strategies for making changes and embarking on the process of becoming either a culturally sustaining or culturally relevant educator. “Good starting points for educators are considering unconscious biases and investigating curriculum. After that, art educators could consider aspects of their education and how that informs their practices” (p. 24). For Buffington, that included investigating her own reflection prompts she utilized with university students that do community work, and recognizing that the language within the prompts was predicated in a deficit-based lens and the way in which changing the language helped her students change their thinking of the schools through asset based lenses. Other strategies she offered are listing all the artists a teacher acknowledges in a year-long curriculum and determining how many of them are people of color, female or gender nonconforming, from other parts of the world, LGBTQ+, etc. and then going the extra step of not only teaching about diverse artists but overtly addressing and talking about artists’ identity, race, culture and background with students. She offered discussion strategies that encourage agency and don’t just position the “teacher" as the “direction giver” and students [as] the “direction followers.” She noted, “Although there are times for step-by-step demonstrations, art educators should also allow student knowledge to guide learning and recognize that all students have knowledge that may or may not align closely with the knowledge that schools embrace. Making space for diverse “home knowledge” and allowing students to contribute their ideas about art, artists, and artmaking are ways to begin (p. 24). Specifically focusing on CSP, she suggested engaging in the local art community and analyzing who different artworks benefit and whose story they are telling. While I do appreciate the steps she outlines and the fact that they are places to start in the complicated process of turning theory into practice, I wonder what the implications are for nontraditional spaces like Core Stage. The article did not focus on the reactions or engagement of different students, rather steps for educators to make.

While obviously this is of the utmost importance when creating social change within CSP, I question how an educator will create projects that allow for the plurality of culture and language or create space for storytelling and agency without knowing what youth want to do or believe will be the most beneficial. I also think that before discussions can happen, trust must be built and mutual understanding must be set. Buffington described co-creating group norms with students, and talking about artists' backgrounds, but I believe that creating a space of trust and excitement -- creating a space where challenging dominant understandings of creativity is accepted -- comes first. How will you facilitate conversations without those connections? Buffington's article has a specific audience, one that does not include nontraditional classroom spaces, but even so, her suggestions are applicable anywhere and everywhere in the steps to becoming either a culturally relevant or culturally sustaining arts educator.

Another study I drew from for practical implications of CSP was Laman, Davis, and Henderson's (2018) study around writing, art and hair. They worked in partnership with a class of teacher candidates (TCs) and a second-grade classroom in an urban setting to put theory into action and learn about the importance of culture, language and identity in creating curriculum. The goal was ultimately to have college students learn from and with students and create a written and illustrated story about students' hair, based on a culturally sustaining book the classes had read together. The study itself, however, focused on four teacher candidates (three White, one African American) and their interactions with students in a first-year teacher's class. By looking at written responses from the TC's, Laman, Davis and Henderson aimed to support the unpacking and challenging of "deficit orientations to children, communities, and families" that the TCs entered the space with (Laman et. al., p. 13). The experience helped TC's to begin to understand the culturally sustaining, intentional moves that successful teachers use in urban

settings to support their students -- namely storytelling and including cultures and languages within curriculum. The researchers acknowledged the small sample size and the concern that the TCs did not learn enough about the surrounding neighborhood and used these shortcomings to inform changes not only to future courses, but to the overall preservice teaching program, such as incorporating neighborhood tours. The one-on-one attention that students received during this project not only benefited the TCs but also provided more time for relationship building, connecting to my earlier argument on the importance of relationship building and trust to create a CSP based environment. One-on-one attention is a good way to connect with youth, ask questions, learn about their culture, language and home, show you care by actively listening and begin building trusting relationships. This is something that is possible to do within Core Stage due to the large number of volunteers. In all, though I am a peer to the volunteers rather than a professor and do not have the luxury of weekly hour long class time, verbal reflections are something that is done weekly after Core Stage programs in the form of debriefs and could have been more intentional around critical, culturally sustaining conversations.

That said, more needs to happen than just talking about culture. Volunteers and leadership must be self-critical and willing to learn. In Acuff's (2018) teacher action research, she called out the vague and deracialized literature on critical multicultural art education that is not disruptive of status quo curricula. By using examples from her preservice teaching students and her own reflection she offered pedagogical methods (reflection tools, open ended prompts, group learning), for other culturally sustaining art educators to take from "doing" multicultural education to "being" a critical multicultural educator. The term "being" means different things to different people but for her it means "recognizing and considering students' lived realities and life experiences when building art education curriculum" (Acuff, p. 47). I agree with that

definition but rather than "considering" I define "being" as a way of thinking and moving, actively recognizing, celebrating and sustaining students' cultures and languages in all spaces.

The focus of Acuff's analysis lies in two themes central to critical multiculturalism; "narrative and critiques of power" (p. 42). Acuff wrestled with the dichotomy of wanting her students to come to understand issues such as racism, heterosexism and sexism on their own but also wanting to openly discuss it in class. She ultimately chose to have weekly discussions that helped facilitate critical self-reflection, though she never plainly states how she went about facilitating them. She utilized tools that I have come across before, such as one-on-one reflection time and open-ended prompts based on self that allow for agency within answers rather than correct or incorrect answers (Buffington, 2019; Acuff, 2018; Laman, Davis, & Henderson, 2018). The open-ended artistic prompts she used for things like the course's final project benefited specific students and their learnings by helping them in creating a piece of work (art work, lesson plan, paper etc.) that told a story of them; what's important to them and their research, who they are and more. The end results were artwork that told different stories of self and identity, each with a clear narrative. I believe this tool is one of the most useful, especially when working with students who are coming to an afterschool program after being "taught at" all day, as it allows for more flexibility and thus engagement and benefits all involved.

Paris hints at culturally sustaining pedagogy being hard to enact due to the fact it is unfamiliar for many teachers; as in, it is not the way we were taught. While the above research proves culturally sustaining pedagogy lends itself well to creative outlets, the target audience for many studies combining the CSP and art is in-service and pre-service teachers and takes place predominantly in traditional classrooms either at the K-12 or college level courses, especially teacher education courses. My research focused on an afterschool program without a mandated

curriculum. The curriculum is created and implemented by college students similar to Acuff (2018) and Laman, Davis and Henderson (2018), but I am not able to hold a class to teach about CSP. Instead I had occasional trainings and short weekly check-ins. Personally, I feel like I have come to understand what CSP can look like in art spaces, but it was a process. I struggled with identifying how to take all the learnings and practices from the above studies and create a curricular framework that is accessible to an 18-year-old freshman, and avoids surface level implications of culture such as described in Buffington (2019). The first step is conversation around culture, race and identity. I believe that this will only happen in a space where trusting relationships are built, and people are open and willing to reflect on their own positionality, privilege and identity.

So then, overall what makes art education spaces culturally sustaining? A review of the literature revealed that art educators have implemented CSP in art classes (and generally) in the following ways:

1. Using of narrative and storytelling.
2. Encouraging open, explicit discussions about racism and other forms of oppression.
3. Reflecting on your own unconscious bias and the ways it may manifest.
4. Utilizing open-ended prompts in discussions/dialogues.
5. Creating space for youth to use their own cultural knowledge and ideas to contribute to space and curriculum (space for feedback).
6. Encouraging alternate ideas of creativity, learning, art and history rather than just dominant ideas.
7. Letting youth facilitate or co-facilitate discussions and art lessons.
8. Including the community within work and creation of CSP art curriculum.

Whiteness Theory and College Volunteers

As my research continued with my culturally sustaining lens, I noticed a recurring trend within observations, interviews and debriefs. While White volunteers addressed and acknowledged linguistic and economic differences between themselves and youth we work with, there was never any conversation about Whiteness and privilege. A central part of culturally sustaining pedagogy is building critical consciousness, but how do you build it? I began to look more closely into race and Whiteness and the uncertainty and lack of conversations around race. This quickly led me to articles on Whiteness and Whiteness theory, a theory I use to frame White volunteers' actions, reactions, and lack of conversations around race and culture.

Though much of the research I draw from in terms of Whiteness theory is based on supporting pre- and in-service teachers, I view the college volunteers for Core Stage as educators. Regardless of whether they are teaching a lesson or serving as a youth leader they are educators and coming from positions of power. I recognize that there are obvious differences between pre- and in-service educators and White college volunteers. But based on the organization of lessons volunteers create and implement or help implement, they are educators, supporting youth exploration and working intensely to perfect lesson plans.

Critical Whiteness theory grew out of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Focused more on Whiteness as a default and as an invisible norm, the specific goal of Whiteness theory is to challenge the silence around Whiteness and question why it is a marker for normalcy (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Frankenberg, 1997; Leonardo, 2002). "Whiteness studies" is a growing body of scholarship that explores the pervasive effects of Whiteness and its accompanying silence, and grapples with the ways that White people avoid talking about Whiteness and its inherent privileges (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Leonardo, 2002).

Part of the reason White volunteers don't feel comfortable talking about race or Whiteness is, at least in part, because the leadership team and I did not prepare them to do so. But this oversight I believe is in part due to the fact that we, as White volunteers and leadership, don't have to think about Whiteness, race, or the effect on others. As Peggy McIntosh stated, "Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average" (1989, p. 1). Whiteness is the norm, whether it be the "flesh" crayon color or Band-Aids, US history, or the main character of a book being White unless the author actually states otherwise. Whiteness is the silent default of our society. By silent, I mean that you won't see Crayola® saying that "flesh" color is White skin only because unless it's actually pointed out and named as problematic, it's not abnormal or worth noticing for most White people.

In her book "White Fragility" (2011), Robin DiAngelo suggests that Whiteness isn't talked about within North America (DiAngelo, 2011). While colleges offer critical race theory courses and workplaces may have "cultural competency training", conversations on race for White people often are limited to a few hours or they are coded (as in urban/inner city being coded language for black and brown bodies) and don't explicitly talk about racism. White people are able to avoid what DiAngelo calls "racial stress" and remain comfortable and insulated with their privilege. DiAngelo further explains, "This insulated environment of racial protection builds White expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility" (p. 54). DiAngelo describes "White Fragility" as a low ability for White people to tolerate racial stress which in turn triggers displays of emotions "such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation" (p. 57). Some may not respond with anger, but rather pushback claiming they already had classes or trainings on this and know it. All of these

reactions are seen as resistance and "reduced psychosocial stamina" (p. 55) that result from racial insulation, which further reinforces tendencies not to address race or Whiteness in order to avoid such reactions. There are a number of "triggers" that can cause White Fragility ranging from "suggesting that a White person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference (challenge to objectivity)" to "being presented with information about other racial groups through, for example, movies in which people of color drive the action but are not in stereotypical roles, or multicultural education (challenge to white centrality)" (p. 57). All of these triggers name Whiteness or challenge the accepted norm, thus causing racial stress and challenging Whites' entitlement to racial comfort. If DiAngelo is correct that White Fragility thrives within White people's discomfort when talking about race, then it thrived in Core Stage. At Core Stage White volunteers feared "saying something wrong" or didn't think "it's appropriate to talk about [race] at an art program or with kids" (interviews with volunteers Carissa and Sam), often shutting down when topics around race would come up and even disciplining students for talking about race, limiting any space for conversation or dialogue and pressuring Jessica (the Executive Director) and me to avoid the topic, a mistake we did fall into.

Martin & Davis (2001) focused on Whiteness and the problematic nature of both not explicitly talking about Whiteness and the privileges that come with avoiding it. For White people, your race is often not something other White people think about when they see you for the first time, as usually in most spaces White people are the majority. Furthermore, Whiteness is often synonymous with "American." Martin and Davis pointed out that research on different cultures and intercultural communication rarely listed White people as anything other than "Americans."

This phenomenon isn't just in research. This year at Core Stage's elementary program, a volunteer was leading a lesson on family trees. She used her own nontraditional family as an example and showed the group of 14 six to eleven-year-olds pictures of her family, her dogs, and her friends. She explained that families don't have to be just your parents, but can be friends too when a six-year-old boy raised his hand. "Your mom and dad are White, and you aren't?" he exclaimed. Silence. Nobody knew what to say in response. A very pregnant pause later the volunteer responded, "Yes, they're American. I'm not originally from America. Ok so, let's go to the tables and start by making a list of who your family is." I wonder what the six-year-old thought as a student of color. In a moment of uncertainty, we, as volunteers, equated Whiteness to being American. While it was an awkward moment, we all laughed it off later, but that may not be the case for that little boy or the other students of color in that room. At my college, positionality, privilege and identity are a popular topic of conversation -- a topic I know many volunteers have engaged in education classes and yet, many still fear talking about their race and identity or addressing cultural differences head on. So then, how do we address that fear and get to a space where race, culture and privilege are conversations that happen honestly and lead to a space for culturally sustaining teaching?

One way is through storytelling, either cultural (historical, factual or fictional) or personal (narrative account). In my opinion, stories are a form of art that is underutilized but can be used to create connections and in turn a space where volunteers and students are open, willing and excited to have culturally sustaining critical conversations. Green (2003) believes that rather than just hearing stories about how great youth work is, preservice education courses must encourage White students and economically privileged students to end the silence and tell difficult stories about race, class and Whiteness in order to begin to notice and unpack White privilege and

acknowledge inequities. Green utilized this in her own teaching, using her own personal stories and reflections about times she struggled, times she failed, times she learned and times she grew in order to invite her students to engage in dialogue and unpack their own experiences in the form of narrative stories. She used open-ended prompts and questions to help guide her students' reflections on work they did at community organizations. Often, she found that many White students avoided the topic of race, trying to change the narrative to be positive and polite: "[White] students often seek service-learning classes because they want to "feel good" about "helping others," and because students select service-learning courses to feel good personally, it may be even more difficult to explore with students how cultural and systemic racism and classism create the need for service learning in the first place" (p. 282). Though I was not a professor teaching a college class, this was an issue I repeatedly found myself grappling with during trainings with the preservice college educators I worked with (Core Stage volunteers). Volunteers wanted to "give back" and "help others" but were uncomfortable and unwilling to explore and unpack privilege or even talk about race in detail, saying it was "counterproductive to over focus on it" and "we don't want to alienate people" (interview with lead volunteer). Most volunteers at Core Stage did not have an issue acknowledging inequities between themselves and youth in interviews and debriefs, but allowed that to feed into the wanting to "help others" savior complex, never, frankly, being given the space to acknowledge and unpack their own positionality. Often these inequities focused on economic differences rather than racial, linguistic or cultural differences. I agree with Green that in order to have successful community learning that works towards creating social change for all, we, as volunteers, must first be willing to talk about Whiteness and systems of oppression and be critical of our own privilege, positionality and assumptions within spaces. I believe these conversations should also

transfer over to programming and include youth opinions. In order to do so, volunteers must feel they have a space and support in unpacking privilege and positionality and feel prepared to have critical conversations with youth as well. Telling honest stories and encouraging volunteers to do the same is a way to make this happen and begin learning and unpacking how positionality and race come into play as White college students working with urban youth. However, people need to be supported and willing to take that risk and see the beauty and artistic value of storytelling.

Community work and youth work can often be a place where White people can affirm their White privilege and engage in work that makes them “feel good” but doesn’t always benefit others (Endres & Gould, 2009). Through research on a college course that focused on “Whiteness theory,” Endres and Gould saw students recognizing and grappling with their Whiteness and privilege in written responses within course sessions. However, once students went to a community organization placement, they did not take these reflections and learnings and turn it into action. The authors call out institutions and professors for their roles as “White blinders”, unintentionally normalizing Whiteness and missing anti-racist teachable moments.

I believe it stretches beyond professors and institutions but into every person in a position of power, such as myself and other volunteers. How many times did I unintentionally normalize Whiteness and miss anti-racist moments within Core Stage and myself? How has that affected those around me? These questions are ongoing, and I acknowledge that as a White woman, I normalize Whiteness and miss anti-racist teaching moments often[9]. My goal was not for myself or volunteers to become perfect and completely anti-racist as I believe it is an ongoing process, a goal you can and should never fully reach. What is most important for growth is reflection, self-

[9] An example that I found of an anti-racist teaching moment I missed is my lack of response to the normalizing of Whiteness equaling American during the lesson on family trees or the silence in response to a student saying her community is “the ghetto”, explained further on page 74. It was through reflection and documentation that I discovered and explored these moments where I backed down rather than utilizing the anti-racist teaching moment.

criticality and listening to those around you, all of which start with being open to learning and making mistakes.

But let's circle back to why volunteers don't feel comfortable talking about race. According to Álvarez (2018), one reason is fear. In a mixed methods study, Álvarez spoke with 336 White teachers on their feelings about talking about race in K-12 classrooms. They found that most teachers believed that talking about race was important, but at the same time avoided the conversation out of fear or to protect their own interests or jobs. While it does show a level of consciousness to be able to acknowledge the importance of talking about race, the "fear" of the conversation is limiting and leads to a colorblind teaching framework that Álvarez observed. He believed this was partially due to preservice teaching programs not exposing preservice teachers to race and positionality, but Green (2003) and Endres & Gould (2009) found this problem even after teaching about Whiteness theory. So, what does it take to shift one's orientation, and action in the world?

In my research, the goal was for critical conversations to be with college volunteers *and* youth, taking into account both college students' and middle school students' agency. I aimed to make conversations about culture, race and identity a central part of trainings for college students as well as incorporated into art activities. My goal was to create caring relationships across racial lines, while making sure to recognize and name race. According to my theory of change, care and relationships of trust are important when combating the silence around Whiteness and privilege and affirming racial identities, ultimately in order to create a space that challenges the status quo and fosters open conversations on race, racism and Whiteness (DeMeulenaere, 2012). However, as with most things this was easier said than done. From the above studies I took a few key learnings that guided my thinking within Whiteness theory:

1. Relationship building across racial lines through one-on-one time, patience, interest in learning from and about youth, and time to joke around and have fun is essential for creating a space for CSP to happen. By relationship building I mean caring relationships that recognize and name race/racial differences and are meaningful and supportive for youth and volunteers alike.
2. A few training sessions will not change a volunteer's entire mindset and consciousness but that does not diminish the importance of having conversations on culture, race, privilege, power and other topics often avoided.
3. Youth having agency over conversations and art is important; open-ended prompts can be helpful and offer flexibility within the traditional binary of correct and incorrect.
4. Enacting CSP in art is hard because it is not the familiar way of teaching. Recognizing Whiteness is essential within this.
5. I, as a head volunteer in a position of power should lead in risk taking around conversations about Whiteness, culture, identity and power while being both constantly self-critical and truthful and open to making mistakes and owning up to that.

4. METHODOLOGY

This is an atypical approach to methodology. This section offers the interventions and actions I enacted at Core Stage, as well as the data I collected and how I analyzed them. I am writing and organizing this section differently from a traditional “methods section” because for this project, the process of action, reflection, and research was circular and iterative. The more time I spent in the teen program of Core Stage, the more data I collected and the more I learned. The more I learned, the more interventions I put into place, and the more interventions I put into place the more data I had to analyze. While I was collecting data from two groups (volunteers and students), I was still actively involved in weekly programming, as a leader of Core Stage. The methodology of this research is thus informed by practitioner inquiry (Cocharan-Smith & Lytle, 2015). Because I am drawing on practitioner inquiry, it is important to highlight my practice (including actions and interventions) as well as my research on those practices. And the ways in which those two were tied together are messy, but in productive ways. While I acted as a researcher, collecting data and taking notes during programming, I was still a practitioner, actively helping facilitate activities, running warmups and pretending to be a “scared tomato” in a drama game.

I collected data beginning in October of 2019 through March of 2020. I only collected data from students and volunteers who consented to be a part of the research and all participants and the organization were given a pseudonym for protection, and given the agency to back out of the project at any point. I obtained permission to conduct research through my institution’s IRB. Because the youth in the project were my students and younger than me, I acknowledge there was a power differential at play and some interview answers may have been affected by that, as in they may not have felt comfortable critiquing Core Stage or being fully candid. In that same

vein, I acknowledge that I was in a position of power over the volunteers as President of the club and a lead volunteer and the power differential at play within this relationship as well. While I am aware and acknowledge that my position as a practitioner and insider might have impacted my research interpretations and searched for discrepancies within data to deal with this, I also see the strengths that this insider perspective brought, as knowing the volunteers and youth and having relationships with them might have engendered open responses within interviews.

Actions and Data Collection

First, I began with surveys distributed through Core Stage at trainings to explore volunteers' perceptions of preparation and training. For this section, anything in a textbox is an intervention/action.

1a) Survey (October 2019)

The first training for Core Stage concluded with participants being asked to fill out an eight-question survey that was emailed to them on their phones or computers. The survey was distributed through Core Stage, but I was granted permission by both participants and Core Stage to utilize it. Questions included, "Did this training help you feel more prepared? If yes in what ways"; "Is there anything that was overlooked or could be added in the future"; and "What new skills (if any) has this training contributed to your skillset? Please explain." Out of 23 participants 15 (65%) filled out the survey (see responses in section 5.1.1.). Based on a preliminary analysis of survey results showing that almost all volunteers felt prepared to discipline youth and utilize the "3 Strike Policy", I decided to focus in on revising the training's focus on the discipline protocol, known as the "3 Strike Policy".

1b) Design in Response to the Survey

An intervention I took as a result of survey findings was to revise training sessions and rework the "3 Strike Policy".

ACTION: Implementing Different "Classroom Management" Practices/Policy

The part of the training that was cited as most helpful in debriefs and interviews with volunteers was role playing of the "3 Strike" discipline policy. The way it was framed in the role play led to volunteers relying on discipline as the immediate fallback for any uncomfortable or uncertain moment they had with students.

For the second training I created five steps *before* getting to a strike to try to mitigate the reliance on discipline and shift it towards taking an inquiry-based approach. The five steps are as follows:

1) Put yourself in students' shoes and realize they are coming from a full week at school straight to our program and may just be tired of the constant instruction.

2) Take an inquiry approach, ask the student what's up, how their day was and about the behavior in question.

3) Ask students if they want to take a break or go get water. (Volunteers were unaware they could do that.)

4) Redirect and remind the student what is being done currently in the lesson/program.

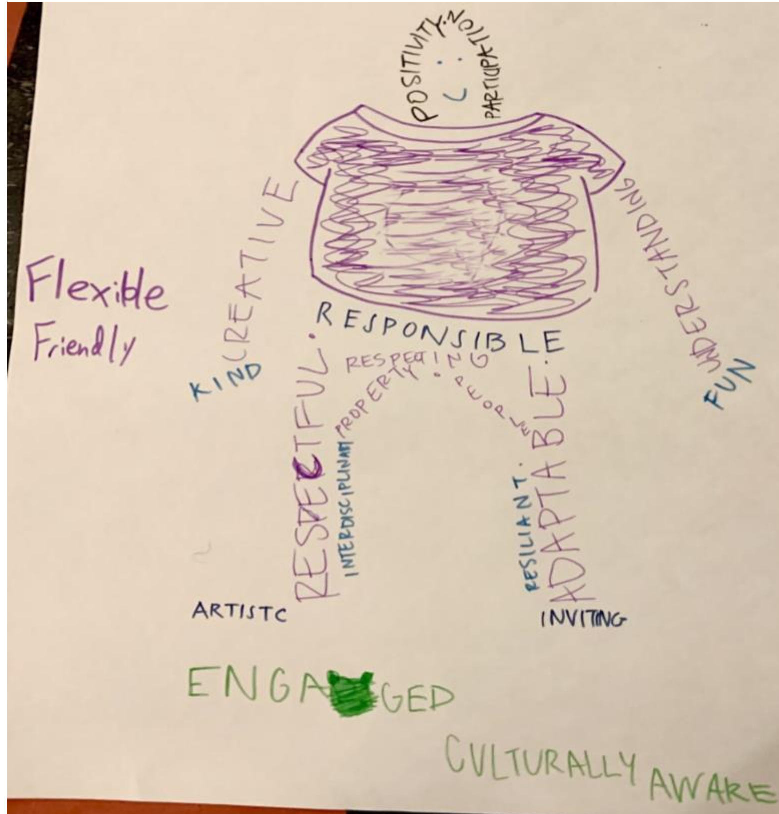
5) Warning of a strike, with the hopes it won't even get this far.

If it were to progress past step five, that is when volunteers could get into the "3 strikes" again.

ACTION: Create A Youth Worker Activity

Using the hands-on nature of the "3 Strike" roleplay, at the second training I split volunteers

into groups, gave them 15 minutes and asked them to draw a good youth worker. I did this in an attempt to encourage group share, relationship building among fellow volunteers and open a discussion of what is important for youth workers to enter spaces with. Groups worked to draw the youth worker and write attributes they felt were important. Attributes included kindness, flexibility, engagement and one group wrote culturally aware.



To the left is an example of one group's drawing. Other examples can be seen in the appendix.

1c) Post Intervention Survey (January 2020)

In order to see whether there was a shift in volunteers' thinking about discipline, I distributed a second survey following my revised training. This survey, like the first, was eight questions and was distributed by Core Stage directly following the second training and I was granted permission to use it. Questions on this survey included, "Did this training help you feel more prepared? If yes in what ways"; "What new skills (if any)

has this training contributed to your skillset? Please explain”; and a question for returners: “Returners: Compared to the last training, what was different? What worked? What did not work?” Out of 29 participants, 18 responded (62%) (see responses in section 5.1.1.). Following each survey and training session I co-taught and observed volunteers teaching at Core Stages afterschool art sessions at the teen program, taking audio-recordings, fieldnotes and conducting interviews throughout.

2a) Audio-recording and observations (fieldnotes) of training sessions and Core Stage programming with youth.

The bulk of my time was spent in the actual afterschool program, supporting volunteers' plans and delivering their lessons, but also facilitating debrief sessions after each week’s programming. From Core Stage’s weekly programming for youth, I collected the following forms of ethnographic data:

Audio-recording:

I audio recorded all volunteer debriefs, and select segments of the programs' sessions. When I say select parts, I am referring to the audio-recording of lesson explanations and its implementation. After each week I listened back to recordings and identified and created rough transcriptions of key segments (defined later) relevant to my project, research questions, and emerging themes. That said, due to the placement of the audio-recorder, multiple voices and volume, I was unable to transcribe most lessons from November to December. Moreover, I only transcribed voices of students who had given consent to the project. I utilized audio-recordings in order to explore how volunteers interacted with the teens. I also utilized my recordings of program sessions to unpack youth interactions with each other and volunteers and whether and how culturally sustaining conversations happened. I audio-recorded every volunteer debrief from the end of weekly programming as well as training in order to remember what happened each

week and understand volunteers' perception of programming and student interactions. These helped me to identify recurring themes.

Interviews

I interviewed six volunteers and four students within the program as well as Jessica, the Executive Director. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed, private setting and allowed for confidential conversations. Interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol of asking youth and volunteers about their experiences in the program and the Executive Director about the history and future of the program. More specifically, I used interviews to delve deeper into what volunteers thought about culture, identity, creating relationships, "misbehavior" and working with urban youth/teens. With the youth I asked about their experiences with art and Core Stage, their identity and what is important to them, about their culture and lastly, about what makes a good mentor/teacher (I did this by asking for advice for a "friend" that is starting a program similar to Core Stage). These helped me to identify personal views and opinions of participants about Core Stage and get deeper insight and ask questions about what I was interested in.

Artifacts and Documents:

In the form of pictures, I collected work created by youth, volunteers and myself. This included volunteers' lesson plans, pictures from the second training of what volunteers believe makes a good volunteer, and some artwork created by volunteers. I also collected, took pictures of (and returned) students' visual art projects that related to culture and other research interests as well as packets used in the co-creation of curriculum. I did this to gauge the volunteers and youths understanding of positive youth work, unpack lessons taught and how accessible and engaging they were for students, and what forms of culturally sustaining conversations and curriculum were brought into the space.

Field notes:

During the program I would write down my observations in a notebook. Then, immediately after a debrief I would write a reflection of the debrief and combine that with my earlier observations to create a digitized journal entry. Though some weeks I

was not able to write as many in-program observational field notes as I would have liked (as I was facilitating lessons with volunteers), I used these field notes and reflections to summarize what happened each session and the noticings and interesting moments I was observing. I also used field notes to mark the things audio-recorders can't catch like attitude, vibe and presentation of lessons, conversations and general programming.

2b) **ACTION**: Co-Creating Curriculum

With the help of my Praxis class I came up with the action to co-create an arts curriculum between students and volunteers. The goal with this intervention was to create a space that is flexible and lends itself to building relationships between volunteers and youth and to creating a sense of agency for both youth and volunteers. This was based on many comments from volunteers in prior debriefs about how students do better with more flexibility and in small groups as it "splits up the energy" (comment from Heather in debrief). The first time I ran the activity I split volunteers and students into groups and gave them a few pens and one piece of paper with a slightly altered version of the outline volunteers use when making a curriculum. The first attempt was unorganized and not culturally aware and sustaining. The worksheets I gave out were all in English and meant to be utilized by college students, not teenagers and the directions I gave were unclear. So, for the next week I worked with a volunteer to create a new format of the worksheet and got help translating the form to Spanish as well as English. The new worksheet asked the groups to come up with a few different options as individuals, then come together and see what they liked. From there they had to go through and fill out together what is necessary for the lesson to work, and identify any issues that may come up. All four groups came up with great ideas ranging from creating a community mural to making art out of food. Though we were only able to complete two co-created, co-led lessons (food as art and community

mural), volunteers and students found this worksheet more helpful and the lessons successful as it gave volunteers opportunities to get to know students and students in a more relaxed setting. That said, no attention was given to power dynamics before, during or after by anyone, myself included. This is definitely an oversight and lessons tended to not be co-led as planned.

Volunteers and teens work in teams to create the best, most artistic designs with oranges, oreos, chocolate chips and bananas.

2c) **ACTION**: Lunar New Year Lesson

In late January, before I had even fully fleshed out a plan for how to help volunteers implement CSP into art education, one of the volunteers approached me and asked if I would

help her and another volunteer to create a lesson on New Year's traditions, specifically focusing on the Lunar New Year. Together we bounced ideas back and forth and created a set of age appropriate games, activities and art for the younger and older youth that she felt represented the Lunar New Year. I created a template for a discussion to take place before we got started with games and activities. In the discussion, I asked students, "What are some things you do on New Year's or Winter holidays?" Students' talked about their varying cultural traditions, food and noticed the differences between their cultural practices. For the activities, volunteers and youth made paper lanterns out of li xi envelopes, played a zodiac game and played a game called the shoe game. The lesson then concluded with everyone getting back together, eating clementines and learning how to say "Happy New Year" in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Hebrew and though unplanned, some of the teens taught how to say it in Spanish as well.

Volunteers playing the zodiac game with students

Challenges with Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, all forms of data were only collected from students and volunteers who consented to the project. While all volunteers who were at the teen program consented to all

parts of the project and data collection, I only received five forms back from students with not all consenting to all parts of the data collection. Though I handed out copies each week for a month for students and their parents in both Spanish and English, I struggled to get them back. I encountered challenges doing research in a program that is working as a part of a bigger program. For example, I had to distribute and receive back my consent forms through the bigger program's administrator who once misplaced the forms students passed in. This was by far the biggest hindrance to my data collection, but unfortunately something that is out of my control. There are many reasons I may not have gotten forms back, all of which I understand and had to keep in mind during my data analysis process.

Data Analysis

I want to be clear about the data that made it into my analysis, what was left out and why. From October until March, each week after programming, after writing reflections and compiling field notes I would listen to recordings I had taken. As I listened, I created rough transcripts of moments I felt reflected themes I had identified or felt were interesting moments of struggle, growth, excitement, engagement, quieting students or disconnects between volunteers and youth. Below is an example of a rough transcript of what I identified as a key part from October 25th. This transcript comes from a debrief with the Executive Director and volunteers:

> Jessica *at 11 mins 34 sec:* That is generally what to expect when you work with teenagers for those of you who uh, who don't have a lot of experience working with teens–or tweens, they won't–uh, a lot less than little kids they won't give you as much like validation or affirmation that you are doing things right, sometimes they will do the exact opposite but on the inside they feel it so it can be like, kind of challenging in that way to work with the teens, and personally feel like it is why people are more intimidated to work with teens than little kids because like you just don't know if they like you and you're like "please like me" like–or if they're enjoying something but.

Volunteers agree

Olivia: Yeah, no, teens are a lot harder and um, I think it's good we have this program after elementary.

Sam: Yeah the little ones really get us ready for the hard work.

Laughter, conversation transitions to logistics about next week

Towards the end I went back through and transcribed in depth debriefs I had marked in my data log as important or worth revisiting. For most interviews I transcribed the entirety of it as they were generally less than 15 minutes (not including a volunteer interview that went for an hour in which I did the same process as done with debriefs). However, just because it was transcribed and printed does not mean it made it into coding. After finishing research, I went back through my transcriptions, research questions and data log and decided that in terms of debriefs and program sessions, I needed to pick and choose days. I chose segments from important dates, times there was conflict or volunteers did not feel the program went well and times I saw growth in order to capture different, conflicting, strong moments in order to get as many complex, puzzling and interesting moments within data analysis as possible:

➢ One day where engagement was low and the subsequent debrief focused on discipline.

➢ A debrief that focused on the struggles of working with teens, specifically in urban environments.

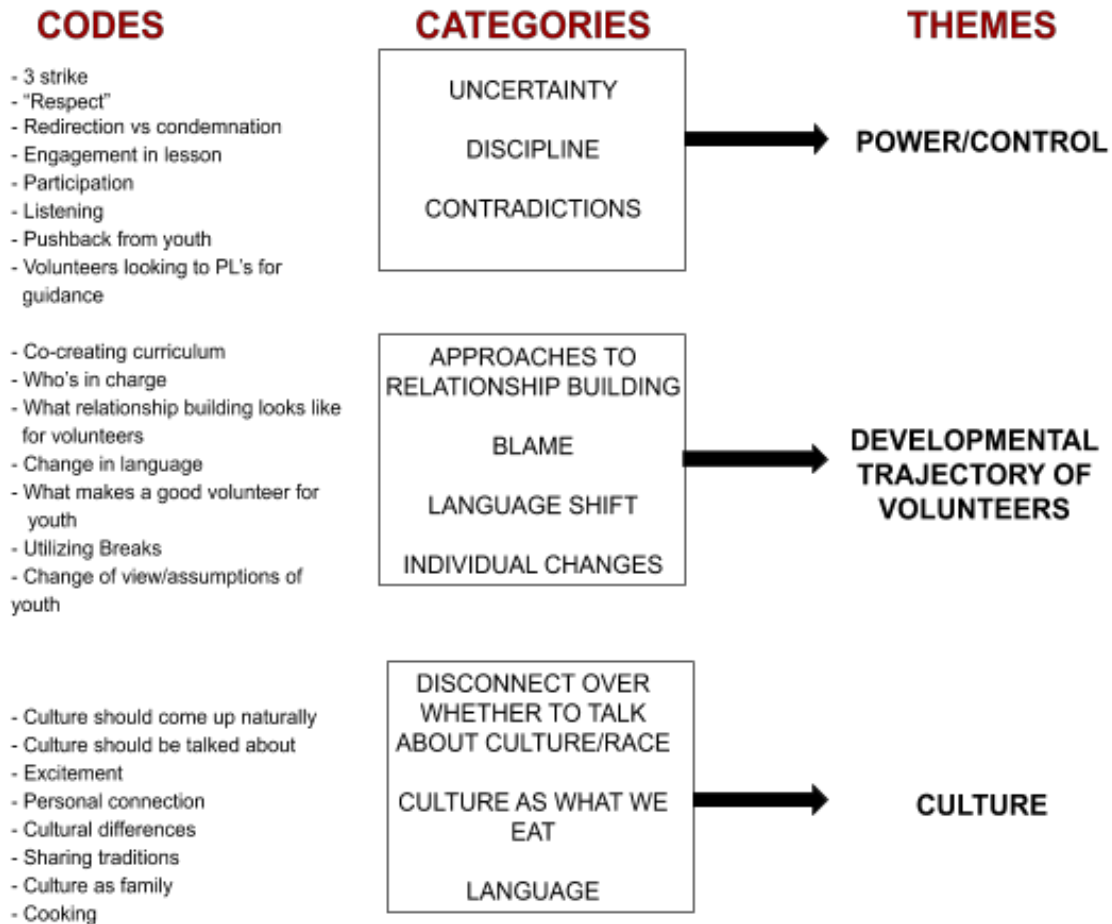
➢ A debrief and lesson that volunteers felt did not go well based on there not being an "adult".

➢ A lesson and debrief focused on culture and Lunar New Year, a debrief about the teen program's future, two lessons and debriefs where we co-created curriculum and implemented it.

➢ A lesson and debrief where I saw a lot of growth from youth and volunteers.

In total, my analysis of program sessions and debriefs focused on five lessons and eight debriefs. I also included in my analysis all four youth interviews, six volunteers' and Jessica's interviews, and transcripts of the sections where discipline was talked about for both "big" training and surveys taken at training asking volunteers what did and didn't work and what they learned.

As I analyzed each document, I created codes of what was said and/or written. After completing a document, I created categories from the codes. From there, every five completed documents I created themes. But that process was not as easy as it sounds summed up. My analysis had plenty of twists and turns, false starts and re-sorting. I often would put a code into a category and realize that it might not belong there. Thus, my codes, categories and themes were flowing and constantly changing until I completed coding. While my findings section will show what my themes are, I also want to highlight what actually led to the themes, the categories and codes that landed within them. Below is an example of some of my codes, categories and my themes:



First, I want to point out that many of these codes and categories fit into multiple different themes. For example, "language" fits into both culture and lack of preparation and control, but for different reasons. Language in terms of discipline and control and the shift from "discipline" to "classroom management" fits under a lack of preparation while language in terms of culture refers more to the different languages that become utilized in sessions that focused on culture and the want for culture to be talked about Given the complexity, it's likely that in my data analysis things were missed, overlooked or influenced by my assumptions/lens. Nonetheless, the process of coding process of coding, though long and winding, illuminated a lot of new things for me that I overlooked during my actions, outlined in the next section.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

Before I go any further, I want to own up to one of my own shortcomings. I've talked about the deficit view that volunteers had of youth at Core Stage and how that led to a lot of the discipline I observed and saw as problematic. I went into this research with this subconscious lens and view of them and missed something; my own deficit view of the volunteers. I was viewing White college volunteers with a deficit that was equally as harmful as the one I perceived in their deficit views of youth, as it did not encourage growth or support. I think sometimes the way I write, or the transcripts don't accurately represent the immense growth that I saw within volunteers and youth alike from the first week of programming and research to the end. I did not step back and see many of the perceived shortcomings of volunteers were my responsibility since volunteers were not well prepared in training. That said, I recognize that it is not all on me either -- volunteers and leadership have a role here as well. It comes down to whether or not volunteers are willing to step up and own that not talking about culture or being closed off to CSP makes them complicit.

A lot of the issues I grapple with in this section are structural or institutional. Within this findings section I will highlight some ideas around power, discipline and deficit-based lenses that were apparent from the beginning of the process. But, I also want to focus on relationship building and its importance to CSP as well as highlight and celebrate the growth I saw, and the appreciation I have for college volunteers and the youth. This section will focus on three recurring themes that I saw from interventions and also determined what interventions would be: 1) power and control; 2) the different developmental trajectories of volunteers and ideas; and 3) notions of culture. All of the themes are cross-cutting, affecting each other.

Power and Control

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is concerned with how schools and learning environments are places where bodies are controlled. For many volunteers, this idea of schools being a place where teachers are in charge and transmit facts to students, and students are learners who follow teacher directions resonates with their experience. For many volunteers, myself included, it is simply the norm. This traditional schooling system we view as normal leaves no exceptions to the rules or place for youth agency. Considering that many volunteers at Core Stage are first- or second-year undergraduates, this traditional idea of schooling often has yet to be explored or challenged, meaning it is still the norm and dominant expectation in learning environments. While I did see volunteers interrogating notions of control and power, the acceptance of the idea that teachers control students is ingrained. It is also, I learned, a mask for their own fear of "failure". Whether it is related to control and discipline, culture and race, or relationship building, everything leads back to a feeling of being prepared. That preparation (or lack therefore) starts at Core Stages training -- the one created to prepare volunteers to work with youth. In this section I will discuss some of the main repercussions that relate to the lack of preparation of volunteers, which prompts volunteers to resort back to what is known and what is "normal" in the learning environments we as volunteers know.

In other words, the volunteers are not "bad" or abusive individuals, but instead, they are enacting scripts of power and control when they feel uncertain and underprepared. Think about it, when we as humans are uncertain and uncomfortable, we seek control (over people, situations, etc.) (Light, 1979). It is an idea founded in psychology and professional management studies that examine the ways we, as humans, handle uncertainty with power. This finding comes from the first training, interviews and my interpretations of volunteers' thoughts around preparation and preparedness. *What my findings show is that this need for control is deeply rooted and invisible,*

like race. It simply is not on White people's radar. According to my data analysis, power and control is a response to uncertainty and feeling like an outsider not knowing what to do, especially as a White person working with urban youth. In the context of Core Stage, it is not necessarily that volunteers seek control and power over students; rather when we don't have alternatives, we resort back to what we are accustomed to. When we as leadership do not prepare volunteers to work with urban youth and only focus on "3 strikes" and discipline, we are not helping to challenge ideas of schooling, and when push comes to shove, volunteers will resort back to discipline and control, or what they know. When students are talking too much or not engaging in lessons volunteers felt the way to mitigate that was by setting the rules, controlling their behavior, and being authoritarian.

Trainings are created to mediate that uncertainty and prepare workers within all different fields, whether it be youth work or healthcare. However, as has been mentioned, the first big training for volunteers at Core Stage spent a bulk of the time focusing on discipline and classroom management, never outlining fully who the students are, how to address your own positionality and privilege and work with urban youth or what to expect going into classrooms. This made it so that volunteers felt unprepared to work with urban youth. In interviews with volunteers I asked the question, "When you first started, did you feel prepared to work with urban youth?". Some of the answers I got include:

> Liam: I like nearly crapped myself the first time I went into the program 'cause I had no idea what was going on. I felt like I was thrown in quite literally and was giving strikes my first week. (interview transcript)
>
> Sam: When I started, I didn't, I didn't really feel prepared. I think the preparation, I mean I think it was always there because I really, think I am a pretty, um, seasoned youth worker, but you won't feel confident till you start going in. (interview transcript)

> Carissa: No. I think…I mean in urban settings there's a lot of different minority groups and like, kids are very quick to point out the obvious like "oh my god that kid is White, you're different, I'm like this", and I had never had to learn how to deal with that before so like, Core Stage's policies helped me facilitate those situations. (interview transcript)

Nearly all the answers I received focused on not feeling prepared at first, but that preparation comes with time. Personally, I feel that we are doing an injustice to youth and volunteers if we are not preparing them to do youth work in an urban setting and sending them in to "figure it out as they go." This leaves room for misunderstandings and mistakes. I personally think that that ideology leads to a lack of clarity for everyone and a lack of space to ask questions and voice uncertainty. Rather, I think we should send volunteers in with not only tools but also goals about agency and positionality, privilege, relationship building, and inquiry and asset-based mindsets. But it isn't as simple as that. In all interviews with volunteers, they talked about the feeling of uncertainty when they first began. How do you help the volunteers leverage that uncertainty so it can become a source of continued learning and self-interrogation? How do you help college students who are often new to not only college and that experience but also to an urban environment to navigate uncertainty and all its complexities when there is no easy script. While I haven't found the definitive answer to that question, my analysis suggests some clues. Among further exploration in interviews and almost every answer in the survey given out after the first training, I found that every single volunteer cited one activity from training as most helpful.

Following the idea outlined by Sam above, the activity was one where the leadership team created sketches that were supposed to emulate different scenarios that can happen at programming and had volunteers practice giving strikes to students. The activity asked volunteers to respond to scenarios where a student isn't participating or listening. So, as

mentioned above, I kept with this for the second main training where I altered the "3 strike" system. Even after spending less time on that section and adding the other activities that were hands-on and worked in groups, survey results showed similar, interesting results, reinforcing the idea that we resort back to what we are accustomed to and grew up with.

Language of Control

The volunteers latched on to the one thing that was explained in depth -- the "3 strike policy" which focused on dealing with situations of "misbehavior". The invisible need for power and control and the idea that we resort back to what is known and how we were schooled (where the teacher knows all and controls the classroom) was apparent in the survey responses from both trainings. The question I focused on in the survey was: "Did this training make you feel more prepared if so in what ways? In the first survey, the word discipline is used over ten times and seems to be the big thing that college volunteers took away from the training. Volunteers felt prepared to discipline kids when they weren't participating, handle students who aren't behaving and give strikes and warnings with confidence among other things.

The second survey was from the second training where I implemented an intervention and spent significantly less time on discipline and the skits. As seen from the data table below, while the word discipline was only used twice, things around behavior like "what to do in times of trouble with a kid" "conflict management" and "facilitate undesirable behaviors" and "what to do in particular behavior situations" were used ultimately meaning the same thing.

"Did this training make you feel more prepared? If so in what ways?"	
Training 1	Training 2
Yes, I feel more prepared to **discipline the kids when they're not participating.**	Yes, **good reminder of what to do in times of trouble with a kid.**
Yes, it makes me feel ready to start working hands-on with the kids and to **confront any behavior problems** that may come up.	Yes, **conflict management.**
Yes, in getting to know **how to react in certain situations, such as when a kid is not paying attention.**	Yes. I felt that I got a good sense of how Core Stage runs and learned **how to work as a volunteer in different scenarios.**
Yes, I like to know about the **discipline rules because it can be one of the tougher parts of working with kids** especially in the more relaxed art-ish setting.	Yes! I learned more about how to **discipline kids in an understanding way**, and the qualities of a good volunteer.
It made me feel prepared with **what to expect with these specific groups of kids.**	Yes, the training taught us **what to do in particular behavior situations**, what to expect and how to relate to kids.
Yes, with **ways to handle students who aren't behaving.**	Yes because I know what to expect, or have some idea on **how to handle different scenarios.**
Yes**, discipline** is great to learn about because it can be a struggle sometimes.	Yes. I appreciated the time to get to know other volunteers and **consider specific situations that could come up in the classroom.**
Yes, being **able to give strikes and warnings** with confidence.	Yes, by giving more practice with **disciplinary situations** and giving me a chance to confidently induct new members.
Yes, I feel more prepared in knowing what we have to do during the program and **how to give out disciplinary measures**.	Yes. I learned how to prepare to teach one week, and provided a refresher to **redirecting and facilitating undesirable behavior**.

Notice the differences in words used. In the first survey, the responses seem to locate the problem within the youth ("the kids when they're not participating", "a kid is not paying attention", "these specific groups of kids" etc.), while in the second seems to focus more on situations ("times of trouble", "particular behavior situations", "handle different scenarios etc.). Though I may have helped volunteers shift the language around discipline and some frameworks and even possibly begin to "re-see" students in a more positive light, the fact is that in practice, volunteers and honestly even myself at times resorted back to shushing, ultimatums, yelling or even threatening students with punishment when they are being "disruptive". The underlying approach to all these mechanisms was still controlling bodies, specifically Black and Brown bodies. Volunteers were never prepared to handle situations where a student was not engaged by asking questions or taking a different, asset-based approaches, rather just resorting back to the system that is known and the act of setting rules we have become accustomed to through

traditional schooling.

This led me to grapple with even bigger questions surrounding the uncertainty mentioned earlier. What does it really mean to shift not only language and framework but someone's orientation and consciousness? By this I mean what would it take to not only help college volunteers to change their language from “discipline” to “conflict management” but to change the way they view discipline, power and control. Unless volunteers interrogate what “management” really means; who is managing who, why are we thinking of relationships as management, nothing will fully change. But in honesty, this is not something I have figured out how to do. Navigating this shift and the uncertainty that surrounds it is easier said than done.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy and Whiteness theory both focus on ideas around control and power within learning environments. Without professional development and preparation, constant reflection and awareness and open dialogue, change will not happen. The traditional ideas around schooling that we, as college volunteers are accustomed to will continue to prevail, whether intentional or not. I’ve also come to find that my original goal was unrealistic. I can't expect volunteers to have a visible shift in their orientation and consciousness, especially in such a short amount of time. Even research on teacher prep programs have found that one- or two-year programs still don’t shift consciousness. But the goal remains to make volunteers aware that part of youth work is always being self-reflective.

Developmental Trajectories of Volunteers

But the volunteers did change throughout my year-long praxis work. Thus, my second theme focuses on what I am calling their developmental trajectories. This section follows the paths of five volunteers and how they developed throughout the course of this project. In the context of culturally sustaining pedagogy, the framework of individual trajectories is incredibly

important. In Paris's framework for CSP, he does not show the trajectories people take in their journey to become culturally sustaining. *Paris's theory is an aspirational view of schooling that we need to be moving towards, yet he never talks about how people get there. He does not outline the twists and turns that are involved in the process of developing cultural competence*. Overall, there are few studies that look at the developmental trajectories of college-aged students doing community work and how they deal with a space that is new, diverse and different where they aren't fully in control. My goal with this theme is to help people understand the trajectory people take and that the trajectory varies and has multiple dimensions in the goal of becoming a more culturally sustaining youth worker. What I am looking at specifically are the volunteers' changes within their interactions with youth, within their views about urban youth, and their openness to culture and critical conversations. I also believe that understanding the trajectories of volunteers has to be informed by the voices of youth, specifically what they see as a good volunteer. Therefore, I first introduce the youth perspectives.

According to the four students I interviewed (Cora, Camilla, Samera and Genesis), who all are new to Core Stage and are in middle school, there are a few things that make a good volunteer. I posed the question as, "My friend is making a program similar to this, what advice should I tell her about what makes a good teacher or volunteer at Core Stage?" Below were their responses:

> Camila: Patience, explain as much as she can and try to have 1 on 1 time with each student, like not in the same day but like get to know students and try to connect with them. And bring food. (interview transcript)

> Genesis: Instead of just paying attention to all the other things they should pay attention to kids' backgrounds and what they feel and what they want to talk about and tell people through art. And that their opinions matter. (interview transcript)

> Samera: She should know like, learn different kinds of people that are going to be in the program, like asking like, how their life is, knowing a little bit more about them. Like, they could learn about like, how they are, how they're different than everyone else. Like asking what kind of traditions they have, what do they usually wear, what do they celebrate. Because some places they celebrate different things. Oh! And um, find what is good for a student or a kid. I would just say try to do her best and like, something fun, something that involves the whole group. Um, like something that will help the community like gardening or murals. (interview transcript)

> Cora: Yeah, they should get to know their students and really engage. Not just be there and do the stuff and then leave but engage with your students. Like ok, I think talking to them– like some people if they are having bad days so like, they don't really wanna do stuff but like, other times people just don't want to do it. It's like I was saying before, you have to really engage and get to know your students, like when they're sad, mad. Like give time for people to relax. Tell your friend to engage with her students, not just be there and then leave. Like get to know them, their identity, their culture, their sexuality. (interview transcript)

All of the answers focus on concepts around care and getting to know students as individuals. For volunteers when I posed a question of, "What makes a good mentor or volunteer?" they responded with similar answers surrounding concepts of care and engaging students, but did this really happen in practice? For each volunteer it was different. I will outline their journeys by separating them from the beginning, middle, and end, focusing on their ideas around culture, positionality, control, urban youth and how Core Stage can improve. I will begin with the journey of Olivia[10].

Olivia's Journey

[10] All names used are pseudonyms to protect the identity of volunteers.

Olivia is a first-year student at Clark who began to work with Core Stage as soon as she could. She is a White woman coming from a suburban town in New England. She is interested in education and theatre and works predominantly with Friday programming, though she has also worked with other programs. She worked with youth before coming to Clark, but said it was different than Core Stage because the kids she worked with all had commonalities that she used to relate to them but at Core Stage the commonalities "are more hidden" (interview).

During our interview and many debriefs she expressed uncertainty about how to relate to students and how to have an impact:

> At first when I joined I felt a little out of place cause like I felt like everybody knew the past volunteers and was like used to them and loved them so much and I was like "ugh I'm a tiny little freshman like I just came and like, like nobody knows or loves me yet" and whatever. Like, I have a very vivid memory of you saying that like they'll love you, you just like, have to get to know them and let them get to know you but like, they're so amazing and give you hugs when you leave and all that stuff. And then like, I came and was like "they're not giving me hugs, what am I doing wrong!" (interview transcript).
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> …
>
> At the beginning I wasn't as, you know, as friendly or vocal and whatever with them. Um, so kind of learning by mirroring other volunteers was a big part of it for me. (interview transcript)

This sentiment Olivia expressed about being quiet and keeping to herself at first was something most new volunteers did and was noticed often, by myself, other volunteers and even students. Camila, a student, in an interview point blank said:

> Camila: [Volunteers are] nice, they're just too quiet. You should–this is going to sound rude, but you should tell them that if they don't participate more they're going to get kicked out. (interview transcript)

Olivia was unsure of how to create relationships and stayed quiet and observed instead. I then asked her how she became more comfortable and she went on to say she "took a leap of faith." What she meant was she committed to the program and to getting to know the students by making herself open, fun, joking around with them, and being a positive role model.

> Specifically with the teen program like, you have to–a volunteer has to, um make clear that they're there and they're there for the kids and they care about them, communicating with the teens and using their language and like, kind of figuring out how to relate to them because that builds trust which fuels success of a program and your impact. But also like, I didn't come in with this, like I learned this as I went and watched you and countless other volunteers like, and the impact it had on them and you. (interview transcript)

In our interview, Olivia talked a lot about uncertainty around giving strikes, talking about culture and creating relationships.

> I was just really nervous. Like I didn't really know how to talk about racial differences and like, how to create relationships across them. I also like didn't know how to give out strikes confidently or uh, what deserved a strike, and yeah. (interview transcript)

In quite a few debriefs Olivia expressed this uncertainty:

> Um, during the lesson when you asked what people do during New Year's someone answered with "we all get drunk" and um, I don't know, are we trying to not say that stuff or like, I don't know." (debrief after Lunar New Year lesson)

> Um, so Jessica, is [swearing] something to give a strike for? Like what is strikable? (debrief from November).

When it came to ideas around culture, race and positionality, Olivia had interesting moments. In our interview and survey after the second training, she talked about how great it was to learn about culture and how, "all of our lessons and techniques used during programming should be inclusive of everyone, and specifically something I didn't focus much on was being

culturally inclusive" (survey result from second training). She also talked in an interview about "how great it was to hear everyone talk about their culture during our lesson on Lunar New Year", saying we should do more of it. In January she decided she wanted to create a curriculum around our differences and our identities and teach it and wanted some help. So, over dinner we discussed. She showed me a video she planned to show the students, of a young girl with cerebral palsy who is able to jump on the trampoline. The activity she proposed was having students write down things that they can do: jump, swim, eat, sing, play soccer etc. and have them share with each other. Her goal was to show that even though we are different, we all have things in common. I asked her what she thought about adding elements of identity and culture such as race and language because we aren't all the same. She said in response 'no, I want to focus more on our similarities rather than differences. I'm thinking I'll do another lesson on culture because I liked the other one where the kids color in an Israeli flag and we talk about culture.' (observation). This was a lesson she was unable to put together, though may lead in future. Circling back to uncertainty, Olivia was unsure of how to have these conversations around culture, race and identity.

Though it may not seem like it, Olivia has grown a lot this year especially in the way she interacts with students. When talking about her own journey she said:

> I think I've grown a lot in the ways I interact with students. Like I feel like I am more open to them and getting to know them and coming to understandings by working together and meeting them where they're at. (interview transcript)

However, I would argue it is more. Olivia was the first volunteer to try giving students breaks and working with the teens as peers. Though she said that in the moment she tends to revert back to the strikes and naming the values of Core Stage, I don't think she is giving herself enough credit. Her journey is certainly not at a straight upward slant; rather it has bumps along

the way. She is a new volunteer and she is learning. She takes a step back and works with students who have been named "problem students" like Christian to come up with a system that works like participating for five minutes and then going for a walk or just taking a break for two minutes. I've seen so much growth in the way she interacts with students, and the agency she is giving the teens. Though she seems to resist centering culture and cultural differences, she is open to learning and growing.

Olivia is looking to take a leadership position next year within the Core Stage club and continue to work on the break system and five steps before a strike with a specific focus on helping volunteers to create relationships with students we work with. She still has a lot of growth but through this year I have seen her try new things and challenge her own biases.

Liam's Journey

Liam had an interesting journey. He started volunteering with Core Stage last year and this year became a part of the leadership team. He did not have any prior experience with youth work before joining Core Stage, but enjoyed theatre and art and wanted to learn more, prompting him to join. I had known him prior to Core Stage through theatre spaces. He comes from a suburban town in New England and is a White man. What is interesting and something he grappled with during our interview was his identity and how he is perceived as a "very White man who also speaks Spanish, something nobody expects" (interview). He was at almost every Friday program this year.

When he started at Core Stage, he did not feel prepared at all and was thrown in. For him there was a learning curve. That learning curve was getting to know students:

> They get to know you, you build a relationship. And I think that's one of the fundamental, um factors in, in good mentorship or volunteerism is building a relationship with the clientele who like, it doesn't stem from saviorism or it's just like a desire to get

> to know somebody. And like also just knowing what you are getting into with this like I said. Like that is why I think the exercise that Jessica did on strikes was helpful, though granted for I think a bit too long. Cause in reality every volunteer regardless of country, culture, language is going to be like "hey that kid shouldn't be doing that" but it's just a matter of how do I say it? I mean strikes like, it feels like part of our, like social imaginary around like schools and growing up in, uh, maybe it is just New England but maybe in America, like we sort of have like the gold stars and 3 strikes and like those are understood by most kids and pretty effective so I think that activity also helps the learning curve. (interview transcript)

Liam holds onto the idea of strikes being a part of the "social imaginary" around schooling but as a positive, as something that can't be changed. But what deserves a strike? According to Liam in a debrief:

> You should always try to redirect but you know, when it gets to a point of "I'm misbehaving to misbehave" like to piss people off, then yeah that deserves a strike right away, like that and bullying. (debrief from November)

While many other volunteers were unsure of how to approach or answer questions about culture, race and identity Liam openly and honestly answered any and all questions. During our interview we talked about whether the training helped him understand issues of race and culture. For him, it did not, but suggested we look "to see what sort of, corporate diversity trainings look like and how, we might sort of take that package and adapted for ourselves, cause, you know, the reality of the matter is that Core Stage is a business like organization, it's a corporate organization to some extent." (interview). He suggested we continue to tweak it until we get it right. When I asked him what it would look like right he responded with:

> Liam: Um, ideally like we could have programming based almost entirely around culture.
>
> Hannah: Um, can you say more about that too?

> Liam: Yeah, it can be arts and culture. Um, in fact, I think the two are difficult to separate, which is interesting because I feel like the kids inherently have these like lines that they've drawn between themselves, you know, based around maybe the color of their skin or the languages that they speak or, and these are things that, you know, the kids will tell you that they do this. Like I asked a kid, do you speak primarily English or Spanish at home, handing out a form. And she said, I'm black. And I said, do you speak primarily English or Spanish at home? And she goes, I'm black. And I go, so she's like so English. And I was like, great, thanks. Cause like, and like not being presumptuous I think is helpful, but like I think realizing that they are– (interview transcript)

I've always wondered what he was going to say when he trailed off in the last sentence. Within this small segment, there was a lot to unpack about Liam, and learn about where Liam may have been at the beginning of the project. While Liam seems to believe that we should have programming based entirely around culture, he almost blames the youth for this not happening by saying that they have lines drawn between them. The position he takes when he tells the story about the girl is also very interesting. Liam may have thought he was being linguistically sensitive by offering forms in both Spanish and English, while, as Paris says, schools are becoming more and more linguistically complex. When Liam approached the young woman, he was doing so through a lens that upholds the English-Spanish dichotomy: that is, you speak either English or Spanish, not accounting for the linguistic diversity. It was actually Cora who this happened with and though I did not bring it up, when I asked her about her identity she said:

> Cora: Well, I'm Black, a woman, I want people to get to know me and be respectful and not assume shit. I'm Haitian. I don't speak Spanish, um, I don't like repeating myself a bunch of times, I like acting, and I want to be an activist. Oh, and I love sneakers. (interview transcript)

Cora and Liam expressed different views of the situation. While Liam may have thought he was being linguistically sensitive, Cora felt he wasn't listening and wasn't entertaining the

possibility that she spoke something other than Spanish or English. While volunteers thought and talked about culture, they did not pay attention to multiple languages and language practices at home. That said, sustaining discourses and languages is an important part of Paris's culturally sustaining pedagogy, so the lack of overall attention to languages and discourses has dangerous assumptions and implications tied to it, as seen with Cora and Liam.

During programming Liam was always the one to discipline students and give strikes. He often would take an almost deficit view of students and would often be the one to say things like, "Kids will talk back to you" (audio recording from second training), and was one of the ones that at the beginning saw the teen program as exhausting saying things like "It's a lot harder and they don't want to listen" (debrief from November). It was placing the blame on students. Interestingly enough, this is where I believe Liam had the most growth. Within the last two months I saw him changing his opinions and placing the "blame" instead on the teachers that supervised the program. While he kept his focus on discipline, he saw co-teaching as helpful as the students had to quiet each other down he also saw the inequities in the ways the teachers treated our students. He focused on a situation with one of the students who led the community mural lesson:

> So, what I have specifically in my mind right now is [student], somebody told her, I think it was Olivia, right? Yeah you told her that she could uh, take a break and relax for a little bit because she came up with the curriculum and taught it which like, sure whatever, if one of us said that then fine, whatever we'll all back you up on that, um, but then [the teacher] was like "no you have to draw on the thing too" and she was pretty pissed off about it, which is pretty reasonable too since like, it's really frustrating to like, have one authority figure punish you for a thing that the other authority figure said you can do and then then like, there's no right answer, um, so I don't know if we can get them to leave, or (group laughs), I mean we don't need them? (debrief in February)

Other volunteers agreed saying the treatment was unfair and Liam led the charge of drafting an email to send to the teacher with our needs. He also continued to advocate for talking about and incorporating culture, always helping to try to bring it up in debriefs or other conversations whether it be the one on the Lunar New Year or after a ukulele lesson where he talked about the different cultural norms and how we can use them to help students and make relationships. In debriefs at the end of February he also began to support the ideas I was bringing in more and more, pushing back on volunteers like Josh who said co-teaching and co-creating curriculum was too lax and made it seem like we don't care about the program saying "I don't think that's true, they seem to really like it, we like it, it's going well. What do you mean?" (debrief from February) Through I dialogue with Josh, I watched Liam eventually help him to reorient that thought to be about the importance of volunteers coming into the space with a positive headspace and open mind.

Overall, Liam, like Olivia, grew in some ways, but there were bumps, and he is far from perfect. He still has some confusing ideas around culture and often would take over and take control in the group he was co-creating curriculum with, and within our debriefs as well, making it clear he had had a hard time with them. That said, he was always open to learning and had tons of ideas that he was willing to work collaboratively on and was very supportive of this project. Liam is graduating and thus not continuing with Core Stage but will continue to do this style of work in future in his intended field of arts-based therapy.

Sophia's journey

Sophia is in her first year at Clark. The first time I met Sophia she told me she was an intern with Core Stage. Mind you this was her first semester of her first year, showing her commitment and excitement for the program and work Core Stage does. She is incredibly

committed and always takes initiative, often creating curriculum for all the different programs weeks in advance. Sophia is a woman of color who grew up in an upper-class suburban town. She chose to work with Core Stage because she has “the materials and resources to give back to and help people” (interview). Her previous experience with youth work was also in a setting that utilized CSP, a culture-based camp.

> Sophia: Because of that camp I know what it's like to work with kids. And also I know what it's like to work with kids, I guess like of color. And a lot of the things that had to do with like I guess at culture camp was about identity issues. Um, and so not only could I provide them with like art lessons and just passion for whatever I'm teaching them, I could also bring them just an understanding of like I get what they're going through, ‘cause I've been in their shoes. Um, yeah. (interview transcript)

Sophia brought that understanding, but sometimes struggled with her own biases and view of urban youth based on her upper middle-class background and the matching background of the youth that attended her culture-based camp which was expensive.

> A lot of them have families who send their kids [to the camp] have money and I guess financial needs aren't really a big struggle for a lot of the kids versus at, with Core Stage, these kids, we don't really know their financial status, but it's not like, they're not living in mansions in Worcester to say the least. Um, and so like, you know, a lot of the Core Stage kids like they're seeing some of this artwork stuff for the first time. Some of them had never had like real art class or what not, and like at my camp, all of the kids have had, like really good education and art and everything. (interview transcript)
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> …
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> Sophia: I've never worked with like, I guess the inner-city kids before. And so just like kind of seeing like, people who've like been there before and like just kind of like normalizing everything and just, they kind of just seeing what it would be like.
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> Hannah: Can you say more about like normalizing everything?

> Sophia: Yeah. Um, well part of it's like a lot of the exposure to inner city stuff is just stuff I either see on the news or in TV shows. And so that could be like totally fake, glorified or something like that. Um, and you also see a lot of stories about violence and then I guess people using a lot of profanity. And so I wasn't sure what Core Stage was going to be like, but then they, like show like, oh, you know, I want this crayon, but they have that crayon and like you have that at any age group in any school. And so it's like, okay, they are kids and it kinda like lessened like the scariness of working with inner city kids I guess. (interview transcript)

Sophia held many assumptions around urban youth including their lack of access to art and music when in truth, all the students we had in programming had access to art and music classes and most had experiences with art prior to coming to Core Stage, making Sophia's assumptions untrue. These assumptions and negative view transferred over to her view of the teens.

> I was still a little bit concerned about how like teens were gonna just like communicate. And I have noticed it with working with Core Stage about how some of the teens, they're like a little bit fresh if you want to call them that. But you also get that with like little kids too. But just, uh, they'll be like snarky and like yeah, the kind of thing where it's like they're talking about like weaves and like when I was talking about community, they're bringing up ghetto and it's like I am not from the ghetto. And it was just like, I don't know how to respond to certain things. (interview)

I remember the incident Sophia alluded to here. She was trying to teach a visual art lesson on community and asked for examples. "Ghetto" said one student. The first time Sophia ignored it and took a volunteer's suggestion of "art". There was a clear air of discomfort: Nobody knew what to do, myself included. "Ghetto" the student said again, her friends giggling. This time Sophia acknowledged it and said "ghetto, I guess that counts yeah" and quickly moved on as the students giggled. We pushed forward. Nobody knew what to do. Sophia said "I don't know how to respond to certain things" referring to students talking about weaves and ghetto. A

part of raising critical consciousness is helping volunteers to take an inquiry stance toward what students say and do. That is, instead of just acknowledging it as Sophia had done, utilize talk tools such as asking what the student means when she says ghetto? What is important to her that she wants to communicate by saying that?

That moment stuck with Sophia just as it stuck with me. She was one of the volunteers that fully planned the Lunar New Year lesson and is committed to culturally sustaining pedagogy, trying to bring conversations about culture and identity in everywhere and anywhere she can. Sophia's growth can be seen with her honesty and challenging her own biases about urban environments. Though in some debriefs she still fell back into this mindset and struggles with code-switching from age groups (she would speak to our seven-year-olds the same way she would the fourteen-year-olds), she is open to learning and wants to encourage agency for the youth, even the teens who she did not often teach after the incident. Sophia plans to continue her involvement and eventually run for a leadership position as well, taking with her a focus on culture and culturally sustaining pedagogy and a drive to try new activities and start new conversations with youth and hopefully soon, volunteers.

Sam's journey

So far, I've talked about the growth of volunteers and how I saw that, after challenging the deficit perspective I myself initially had with them. However, not all volunteers showed this growth and openness. Sam's journey is one where growth did not really show -- something I want to be honest about, explore, and learn from.

Sam has worked with Core Stage for about the same time as Liam. I knew him prior through theatre spaces as well. He has been on the leadership team for a year and a half. He is a White man from a suburban town in New England and works closely with Jessica. Like Liam he

is confident in his answers and tends to take charge. He is someone whom I would describe as a leader but always has the loudest voice in the group. His journey started because Core Stage was the perfect merging of his two passions: art and youth work. What kept him involved though was the work Core Stage does to "break barriers":

> Sam: We still have a lot of work to do. Um, and most of that is along the wealth disparity line and I think what Core Stage does is break a lot of those barriers and that's what keeps me coming back.
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> Hannah: How do you think it breaks barriers? Like what kind of barriers?
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> Sam: Um, Core Stage for one thing, um, cares a lot about, um, for one thing, um, our positionality physically. Um, we, um, a great example is that, in the backend of our spring season, we were doing a lot of work with a space, which is about 15 minutes out of, um, more about ten minutes out of Clark. And it's, it's out of technically this neighborhood's parameters. And we realized that a lot of our clientele are in this neighborhood. And that's, um, I mean, just statistically speaking, that's a really, that's an impoverished community in, within Worcester. And that's a really diversified community within Worcester. And we realized one day that we were walking our students to bus stops and walking them through that process of what it's like to like use, transport systems. Um, you're jumping through a lot of hoops to get them there. And we said we loved the space, but, um, it was just too far for our people, for the people that we work with and for the young people that we work with. Um, and it's because of those intentional strategic ideas and those, those plans that we set in motion, whatever, we can knock down a lot of economic and systemic barriers. (interview)

I find it interesting the way that Sam uses the term "positionality" and the stance he takes through our interview as a main decision maker for the organization. Most interesting to me is how theory translates to practice for Sam in regard to his views on what makes a good mentor.

> Teachers and mentors and youth workers are all really successful because, um, I think the biggest thing that when you're in that role you need to recognize is mutual learning. Um,

> I hate power dynamics, um, in classrooms and in youth workspaces. Um, I hate calling students kids and children and kiddos because I mean, they're, they're young people, they're an entirely new generation of, of minds that have ideas and senses and feelings in this exact same way that we do. And we were all at that same phase. (interview)

This theory is one I agree completely with, but Sam did not always abide by, or enact this. In this interview alone he used the word "kids" six times and often would struggle with code switching. He also often utilized the word "clientele" when speaking about the young people Core Stage works with. In the first training when he was describing the strike system he said "kids are not as emotionally mature as us college students, um so we have a system in place that we use at every program that is called the 3 strike system" (audio recording from first training). Again, he uses the word kids. While other volunteers like Sophia and Liam were open to CSP and critical conversations, I received the most pushback on interventions I wanted to implement from Sam. Especially surrounding leadership decisions and conversations around race and privilege. Sam's voice tended to be the most vocal in conversations, affecting the decision-making process.

In our interview we talked about how to support volunteers and where he saw that volunteers could use support. His answer was resiliency and he connected that to the "3 strike" system:

> Sam: At Core Stage we have a 3 strike system and we emphasize, um, disciplinary action to be reparative not paralyzing. Um, we don't want our kids, um, our young people to feel, um, penalized and scrutinized for the things that they're doing poorly and certainly want them to, we want to focus on, I mean, all art is expressive. We don't want to dim their light. Um, we need to find a way to tell them, hey, what you're doing right now isn't super productive for the space. Um, but if you could just come back, to Earth and like, come join us like here now. Um, we're doing really great stuff and we think that it'd be

great if you joined us and that sounds really culty but it's true. Like that's the, I think that's our great way for our volunteers to get a better sense of what they need to be doing.

Hannah: Through 3 strike?

Sam: Um, I think that, yeah. But I just mean like making sure that they're using language that isn't like super, that doesn't demonize them when they do something wrong or it doesn't like, like no one should be yelling at these students (interview).

However, in many debriefs he talked about what is a “strikeable” behavior. In January he explained a situation that happened at programming where a student was being disrespectful and he dealt with it in not the best way, but wouldn’t have changed how he handled it:

Olivia: At one point one student was in need of a break and going outside and when she did her siblings got upset.

Hannah: Any ideas on how we can help?

Sam: I talked to the teacher and that’s just how that student is; she gets overwhelmed and easily frustrated. But the thing was she was laughing with two students for a while and I think they were making fun of a younger student which is, not ok. I don't know, we had ten minutes and I had threatened to give some strikes before and it wasn’t working so I said to the student “you can either sit over at that chair or sit at the office, it’s up to you” and she was like “I’m out of here I’m going to the office” which is not the choice she was supposed to make but I told her she needs to talk to the teacher before, so I wouldn’t give her her bag so she left without it and that’s when I alerted the teacher and then it was a domino effect. Um yeah, so like I said it was a personal thing the student brought into the space it’s not really anything that we can prevent necessarily we just have to be looking out for it. I don’t think I made a mistake because she was making fun of a student. I tried to get her to talk to me before but she wasn’t having it. Once she left the other students had an immediate mood change. The solution can’t be that we kick people out but like, doing that sort of like you need to sit over there today, we need to break it up you should be sitting with volunteers. (debrief from January 17th)

This was the first day I suggested breaks and offering breaks as an alternative in a situation like the one Sam described. Sam seemed uncertain about exactly what the student was doing but still jumped to threatening strikes and even kicked the student out -- another time that his theory and opinions did not transfer to practice. After this situation Sam stopped coming to the Friday program all together, showing up maybe once more.

Overall, Sam did not show a lot of growth or openness to CSP, critical conversations or examining his own positionality and privilege. This is concerning not only because he is on the leadership team and will continue to be, but also because he is a future educator, hoping to teach at a school near Clark. While I still was able to implement interventions, I worry about the continuation of them as Sam will likely be on the leadership team again and is opposed to many of the actions and interventions. What gives me some solace is the fact that with Jessica's help and support, culture and aspects of Whiteness theory are now incorporated into a value of Core Stage, one they must abide by and strive for.

All of my findings speak to the biggest implication of this project: the importance of continued professional development. College volunteers, like any other educator, need professional development and support in examining Whiteness and their own biases and the effect that Whiteness has on the youth we work with. Few studies have focused on the individual development of college students doing community-work, but I want to highlight these four volunteers' journeys as examples that all point to the need for more, ongoing professional development for college students doing work in communities.

Culture

What is Culture?

How do we define culture? This question has become especially important as my project has continued. During my coding process I aimed to figure out what volunteers and students thought of culture and their views around it. From this process I found a recurring and interesting theme: culture is food. Though volunteers and students mentioned things like traditions, heritage, language and family, a bulk of conversations focused around food. Liam, a volunteer, outlined why he thinks we should focus on food when we talk about culture at Core Stage:

> Liam: Um, but like, I think we need to get at the norms under which culture operates. Um, so, like food, that's something everybody can relate to. Everybody's eaten in their life. Might not be good food, but it is food. So like what types of things have you eaten? Like what types of things did you really like? What types of things did you really hate? Do you hate brussels sprouts because they're delicious and you're wrong, or do you like, hate asparagus 'cause that's a valid hate. Asparagus sucks. Um, but like things like that or like, you know, like what's like a typical food like that like you have at home. And I think maybe not necessarily explicitly using the language of like home culture, or like, something like that. 'Cause that can be alienating for people who feel like they're American and like, feel like their primary culture is American. Like what's your favorite food? McDonald's. Like, like you'll get some looks like that. (interview)

For Liam, food is relatable, something everyone can talk about. I do find it interesting that one of his concerns is alienating Americans and that that is something that is done by using the word "home culture". Liam seems to be grappling with the idea that "American" is the absence of culture. People who feel like they're primarily from the U.S don't have a home culture or traditions they do with their families, but I would argue against this narrative as even the most mainstream "Americans" have cultural practices like Thanksgiving dinner or setting off sparklers on the fourth of July. Similarly, Sam focuses on food when he talks about adding culture into curriculum:

Sam: I think that if we synthesize culture with our curriculum a little bit more, we've always talked about doing like, right, like drawing like food that we eat from the places we call home or um, doing, I don't know the word, I mean there's probably a bunch of different ways that we could implement that into our curriculum a little bit more.

During our Lunar New Year lesson, I explained some of the traditions around Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish Near Year) and asked the group of volunteers and students what different New Year or winter holiday traditions they have:

Christian: I usually stay up till 6 in the morning.

Camila: We eat.

Samera: Yeah we eat.

Student: Rice and chicken.

Other Student: Arroz con Gandules.

Samera: Pasteles.

Camila: Plátanos maduros, pupusas. (multiple students react)

Student: Como se llama the one you put meat and cheese in and fold.

Camila: Empanadillas.

Student: Si.

Samera: There we go.

The teens all talked about different foods they eat: Cora describing her favorite Haitian dish and Camila and Samera talking about their favorite foods from Puerto Rico. This conversation on different specific dishes went on for another five minutes, with the only volunteers to chime in being myself, Jessica and Sophia. Though Christian talked about a tradition of staying up and Samera talked about how her family gets drunk, the main focus is food again.

In youth interviews when I posed the question "What do you think of when you think of the word culture," I got the following answers:

> Cora: I think of when you get together with your family and you do things within the place that you're from like eat different foods, eat different foods from where you're from. Like for me, I'm Haitian and my family always makes a rice and bean dish. Diri ak sos pwa.
>
> Camila: Food (both laugh). Um, culture. I think of food and also clothes and um, traditions and holidays and stuff… like I go to Puerto Rico every Christmas to decorate trees and eat all the food.
>
> Genesis: I think of my family and where we came from. What I represent. And food like arroz con pollo, chicken and rice or flan – or cheesecake.

I wish a transcript could get across the excitement that students had when they began to talk about specific foods. For students like Genesis, her answers went from short, one-word responses to a three-minute explanation of every flavor of coquito (coconut eggnog) she makes with her mom. In all the interviews and during some parts of the Lunar New Year lesson the teens said the food and then described what it was and the ingredients in English to make sure I understood.

The more I coded the more I realized that this is something I am guilty of doing as well, without even knowing. When I talked about my own Jewish or Israeli traditions I tended to talk about food, whether it be matzah or Israeli salad. Even though I stated earlier that my definition of culture stretches beyond food, in practice that theory didn't always transfer. During the Lunar New Year conversation when Sophia talked about her traditions she talked about clementine's and the symbolism behind them and when I talked about Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) I talked about honey and M&Ms:

> Hannah: So my New Year, I actually have two because I am Jewish so I have the Jewish New Year called Rosh Hashanah which means head of the year and um, and we have uh apples and honey and M&M's to symbolize a sweet new year and at temple they had a huge bucket of M&M's.

While students like Samera and volunteers like Sophia and Olivia talked about traditions, family and where you are from in the context of culture, a bulk of the students, volunteers and even myself equated culture directly to food subconsciously. Though volunteers and students had similar ideas around culture, when it came to implementing it into Core Stage's curriculum, volunteers expressed uncertainty while students expressed excitement and ideas.

Disconnect

From the start there was a disconnect between youth and volunteers about the definition of culture and its importance within an arts space. While some volunteers and most students saw the importance of acknowledging culture and race, but had different opinions of how conversations around culture, race and identity should be implemented, and whether it should be or not. While volunteers were unsure about whether or not we should implement conversations on culture, race and identity or just create a space, the youth all talked about how they wanted these conversations and our own backgrounds included within programming. I posed the question "Some people say that art classes need to focus more on students' backgrounds, what do you think about that?":

> Cora: Yeah I agree. Cause there's a lot of different people from different backgrounds here and when we all come together that's one big culture that we are, um, making. Like uh, like a family. Like, oh! We could do something where we all sit in a circle talking about where we're from and our background and what we do and our different countries and flags and food. That way we, we aren't insensitive towards anyone's culture or

anything and we get where people are from and their background so that nobody is insensitive or something.

Camila: Um, I mean yeah, but only, like if you want to do it. Ok like, if you are Dominican you can draw the Dominican flag and it will relate to you or you could like, do a game or something where like you pass a ball around and, I don't know, whoever had the ball tells you stuff about them. Or we can be in groups and do a project about ourselves and our culture and tradition and food. Just don't give us sharpies.

Samera: Mhm, like learn about peoples, stuff, identity, something. Like it could like, look like, a gathering of people, like, like stands showing the different kind of things. Like a culture night.

Hannah: I like that! Do you think it would be easy or hard to talk about culture at Core Stage?

Samera: Like easy like they talk about stuff like some people have in common. What would be difficult was people saying something personal like, saying like, horrible stuff is going on [in their home country] and it's like making them sad and stuff.

Genesis: I agree cause like, I really don't mind talking about my culture because it is like having my family with me because half of my family is still in Puerto Rico and still having troubles so it makes me feel like my family is right there beside me when I talk about culture and identity. I just feel like my family is there.
Hannah: Do you have any ideas on how we could talk about it during Core Stage and with art?

Genesis: We can talk about our culture by bringing food in and like flags from our cultures, writing a thing about our cultures or even bringing a picture from our family or cultures or like even going around in a circle and talking about our cultures. Or um, um, get at least, get five kids and one or two people and talk about culture and what they represent and what they would like to change about school and everything, like if they would like to speak Spanish or English, or Italian or Irish or Portuguese or French they can. Yeah.

All four students are on board (though to varying degrees), with the statement about including culture and student's backgrounds in art and Core Stage. On the other hand, when I asked volunteers in interviews about culture, race and identity and whether there should be conversations in curriculum, I got uncertainty. Though they seem to see the importance of there being conversations, most of them preferred to focus on similarities rather than differences, as Olivia did while creating a curriculum.

> Liam**:** ...I think allowing the cultural differences to come out themselves and being like passive participants like "Oh look that is a cultural difference, bye", let it float down the river. Just noticing them and then letting them go." (Interview)

> Carissa (Leadership team): I guess in urban settings there's a lot of different minority groups and like–kids are very quick to like point out the obvious like "oh my god that kid is black" and "that kid is white" "you're different, I'm like this" so just like learning how to deal with that because that is something I never had to do before so Core Stage has policies in place that help you facilitate those types of situations and just like–yeah.

> Sam: I think that if Core Stage were to start wanting to put a greater emphasis on culture and identity, we would need to start, we need to find a way to put it in the perspective of kids– students' personal lives.

Looking at these excerpts from a linguistic standpoint, words like "I guess" "if we were to start" and "I think" all express a sense of uncertainty or hesitance. Carissa implied that naming differences (specifically racial differences) should be met with "policies" to help. The policies she refers to are the "3 strike" policies, leading back to the pitfall of training where it only prepares volunteers to handle any and all situations with discipline. Sam said that if we were to put a greater emphasis on culture and identity, we need to make it relevant to students' personal lives. I question what he means by this, isn't culture and identity by default relevant to everyone's lives and identities?

Language

I also want to focus on language. Sustaining students' multiple languages and discourses is a substantial and important part of CSP. Core Stage students spoke many languages at home including Haitian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic, but a majority of the students in the teen program spoke Spanish at home while only one volunteer spoke Spanish. English was assumed to be the dominant, normative language during programming. This was not true. The first week we went in, Liam and Sam led drama games. During introductions one of the girls asked to skip without saying a word. Her friend who was next then told the group she's still learning English. For the rest of the day Liam sat next to her and translated all the directions. but none of the games were accessible as they were all language-based and in English (observation from October). When I interviewed Carissa, she talked about how great it was that Liam translated. In response to a question about whether or not she felt prepared going in she said:

> Carissa: Definitely more prepared then when I first started. Like for example in Core Stage just the other week one of our volunteers had to translate all the directions for games into Spanish because she didn't understand English as well in the middle school program so like, maybe in urban areas there isn't as much access to like, um, learning English as a second language or like just social class in general and things like that so like I think Core Stage has opened me up to those experiences that the kids have and has prepared me more for like knowing what is going to–what can be a possibility of occurring in an urban setting.

Carissa assumed that urban areas don't have access to "learning English as a second language". If assumptions like Carrissa's continue to go unchallenged, Core Stage cannot sustain and support students' languages and discourses and fight against monolinguistic norms. For the student who Carissa referenced, the space was not linguistically welcoming. She did not return to Core Stage until the following semester. She was there for the lessons where we co-created the

curriculum. Rebecca, a new volunteer, was in a group with her. In the debrief she talked about how the girl and her friend were speaking Spanish the whole time, which made it hard to complete the task:

> Rebecca: I feel like, if we didn't have the two girls and it was mixed with maybe other kids that would have been good because I feel like the boys were like working with us, like they were trying to give us ideas and talk but like the two girls were just like, I have no clue what kind of conversation they were having but they were like, not there. Like they were physically there but not there mentally. Like they were just having conversations in Spanish and looking at other people and I think just, I don't know I felt weird not knowing what they were saying. I feel like we should utilize two rooms because it gives them space because when you are in one room you can still hear other people talking.

Rebecca expressed her uncertainty around not knowing what the girls were saying and wishing they would speak English and help her with the activity. In all honesty, the first time I tried to run a co-created curriculum it was not accessible. I did not give out enough forms and the forms were only in English -- a big misstep on my end. Rebecca felt unincluded by the girls' conversation and equated their conversations with not being engaged. This again proves that without explicit dialogue addressing and unpacking underlying assumptions about language, nothing will change, and Core Stage will continue to struggle with enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy that actively sustains and encourages young people's multilingualism and multiple discourses. I believe a big part of this issue is that it was never talked about. The group of volunteers quickly came to rely on Liam, the only Spanish speaker to help in situations such as the one Rebecca found herself in. By doing this, volunteers and the leadership team are falling into traditional schooling norms where students like Genesis are yelled at to "speak English":

> Genesis: ...The teachers I had at my old school when, like we would speak Spanish they would yell at us to speak English and that made me kind of like, angry and sad at the same time because that is part of me. Like, and then by that time I didn't know how to speak English, what I had mostly spoken was Spanish and so they told me to start speaking in English I didn't know how to and so I just continued talking in Spanish and then they didn't understand what that meant to me. But now that they figured out what actually makes students them, um actually I'm happy that they can look at their culture and what they have been through.

The only thing making us better than Genesis's old teachers is that we don't explicitly tell students to speak in English, but rather volunteers enforce monolinguistic norms in more mild and implicit ways than yelling at the students to "speak English." Nonetheless, enforcing those norms meant rarely leaving space for the teens to talk about their own culture, history, identity or language.

There is a clear divide between the teens at Core Stage who *want* to incorporate their culture, language, traditions, food or flags into an art-based curriculum and the volunteers who think it *could* be a useful addition but think it should come up naturally or not at all, as for the majority of them, culture, race and other languages are things that *others* have. There is an underlying idea that circles back to Whiteness theory and Whiteness as default. Volunteers like Carissa, Sam and Liam hinted at the idea that because of their Whiteness they are not qualified to talk about identity, race or culture and instead during interviews, offered alternatives ranging from corporate diversity training packs to letting volunteers learn about culture, race and identity hands-on during programming. They saw conversations on culture, race and identity as a "cool" addition, but not one they knew how to do or would try to incorporate. Maybe it is the uncomfortable feelings around talking about race and culture and maybe it is White fragility, but the volunteers hinted at feeling like because of their Whiteness, they are exempt from, and

should not be talking about race and culture, thus encouraging it to come up naturally, resulting in it not being a priority and not coming up in programming at all, keeping Whiteness in its normative place of silent power. Connecting back to Whiteness, power and control, volunteers do not enter spaces with the preparation to have culturally sustaining conversations and be self-reflective; rather they entered spaces with the idea that they are the teacher and must have control of the space. If conversations on culture and race bring about racial stress and uncertainty it may cause volunteers to feel lack of control over the space and students, causing avoidance.

For me, this project illuminated a lot of ideas around culture I did not expect to find -- such as the idea that volunteers and even myself shared the notion that food equals culture, and ideas about the ways in which culture can and should be implemented into arts curriculum according to volunteers and students. While students also talked about food in relation to culture, they spoke about it in relation to customs, family traditions or the importance of said food to their culture and family. Future research should further explore the intertwining of culture and food and why food is more at the forefront of people's minds when discussing culture as opposed to cultural traditions. Though the youth integrate food with lived experiences and customs, the conversations we had about culture still began with and overall revolved around food.

Implications of Findings

In summation, my findings point to a few key ideas, all interconnected through culturally sustaining pedagogy and Whiteness theory. First, in terms of power and control, my findings show that the desire for control in volunteers is deeply rooted and invisible, like race. The want for control is not on White people's radar. The want for control, I found, is also a response to uncertainty, especially as a White person working with urban youth.

Second, is the messy, nonlinear, and complicated process of developing cultural competence and critical consciousness. I have come to learn that I could not expect to see a change in framework or ideology from beginning to end of this project as it was only a year. Change and development takes time. It is not an upward path, rather one with twists and turns, false starts and dead ends that demands support and perseverance.

Third is the ideas around culture. Volunteers, students and even myself talked about culture in the sense of food. Though at the beginning of this paper I outlined that I believe that culture is more than just food and traditions but permeates every part of life; in practice I equated Rosh Hashanah, a Jewish holiday, with food in an example without even realizing. It is interesting to see the subconscious ideas that we hold around the ways that culture manifests itself. Additionally, the idea volunteers held that culture should be utilized but should come up spontaneously, or when brought up by the youth circles back to feelings of discomfort. Volunteers were uncomfortable bringing up culture on their own, many even insinuating that they do not have a culture and are unqualified to talk about it, similar to perceived feelings on conversations on race.

My findings build on the theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy by emphasizing the importance of relationship building and trust in order to create an environment that supports CSP and by outlining the process of cultural competence. While Paris theorizes an aspirational view of schooling that we need to be moving towards, he does not describe how people get there and the twists and turns in the process of developing cultural competence.

However, I also made mistakes and often fell into the trap of reverting back to what is known and comfortable -- often missing teachable moments or moments that could have been culturally sustaining, such as the moments having to do with language. While I had a focus on

culture, often students' multiple languages and discourses and the sheer importance of multilingualism slipped through the cracks, especially with activities like co-creating curriculum. Reflecting back, I should have spent more time exploring multilingualism, especially in connection to relationship building and creating trusting relationships across both racial lines and language lines. I want to name this shortcoming and recognize the implication of my oversight (such as the conversation between Liam and Cora). While there were times students utilized multiple languages and discourses, I wasn't creating a space for that, or for volunteers to ask questions and interrogate their assumptions about language, making Core Stage's program no better than the traditional monolinguistic schooling that Genesis talked about.

Overall, my goal was not to only showcase my learnings but rather to paint a picture of the process and offer my own journey, missteps, successes, twists and turns and puzzling moments, and name the themes like power and control, Whiteness and positionality and monolinguistic, monocultural norms that thrive on silence. My goal was for this paper to be accessible for educators and practitioners everywhere to see the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogy, being constantly self-reflective, developing critical consciousness and including youth in these processes. But now that the project is over, what comes next?

6. CONCLUSION: WHAT COMES NEXT?

But That Wasn't How It Was Supposed to End

I like to think that everything happens for a reason. But sometimes, those reasons are unknown and unfair. Jessica, myself and the other point leaders had plans to end the semester with a pizza party where we all reminisced about the year and its successes and celebrated the growth of the club, volunteers and youth. I was going to do a mini goodbye speech about how proud I was and how this work we began needs to continue for years to come. But that's not how it happened. Due to the unforeseen circumstances of an international pandemic, I never got my goodbyes. I never got to finish with our co-created curriculum unit or continue to watch relationships being built. We never got to do our final training with the youth advocate who planned to come in, and we never got our closing. It was not how it was supposed to end, but it ended that way. Though I was unable to officially pass the torch and say goodbye, I was able to give the list of recommendations and suggestions, below, to the incoming leadership team in the form of a letter for the future. That all said, there is no point in dwelling on the past, but rather I'd like to first look to the future for Core Stage and the teen program and the implications of my findings.

Using Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in a Community-Based Arts Program

Continuing with the spirit of making this paper accessible and helpful, I want to outline some steps that can be taken to create a space of positive youth work -- a space that is shared, where art, culture and identity is celebrated and where relationships are built, especially in the context of college students doing youth work. The implications are similar to my alterations of the "3 strike system". I am not claiming they will work for every person and every space, but I think they are helpful suggestions, based on my own experience, praxis, and research.

1. Take a step back. Ask yourself what is going on and really centralize your own identity, positionality and privilege in the process.

2. Take an inquiry stance. Include the young people and college students you are working with within the process. By inquiry stance I mean interrogating assumptions, questioning why you think about something in a certain way and what points to that being true. Instead of assuming what is best for the program or young people and college students you work with, ask them what they want to see, what is important to them and how you can support them. Taking an inquiry stance that includes those you work with will ensure that change is made with the best interest of those at the heart of the mission of the project or program.

3. Use tools like storytelling, using multiple discourses or languages, dialogue tools, relaxed time meant for relationship building, drawing and yes, even food -- culinary art is an art form.

4. Make mistakes. While this may seem counterproductive, if you are always planning you will never learn. So, try new activities, resources, tools and if they don't work, learn from that and try something else.

5. Persevere. Many educators and college students were not taught in culturally sustaining ways, meaning we have to unlearn strict, traditional ideas about learning and adopt new ideas and pedagogies. It should not be an easy process or even a process that has an end, but persevere and acknowledge you won't be perfect.

6. The biggest implication of this project is the need for *ongoing* professional development that focuses on culture, race, positionality and privilege. Professional development trainings must happen often and address the intersecting, multiple identities

of young people you work with. They must subject White people to racial stress and encourage conversation on Whiteness and racism. Often, professional development is left only for in-service educators and youth workers, but I argue that professional development needs to start as soon as possible and needs to be at all colleges that interact with the community around them. For Core Stage that means ongoing, monthly trainings organized by our new training chair that focuses on helping volunteers refine skills in relationship-building, culturally sustaining pedagogy, unpacking privilege and positionality, developing critical consciousness and putting all the skills into action through hands-on activities. This all begins with building trusting relationships, something that must be at the forefront of professional development for all youth workers. In the spirit of making this thesis accessible I want to offer some specific professional development/training actions for other college students engaged in or interested in CSP-based youth work to utilize based on what I've done with Core Stage.

6.1) Begin with initial trainings that problematize a focus on discipline and create space to talk about what it means to "get to know" the youth (using examples from this thesis);

6.2) Hold regular, ongoing debriefs that involve role-playing of situations and reflective surveys;

6.3) Create space for the co-development of curriculum, accompanied by focused debriefs on power, culture, and relationships.

Personal Learnings

Through the last year and a half of praxis work I have learned a lot. Where I began is far from where I am ending. One of my favorite quotes, which has become a mantra that I live by, is

simple yet fits well into my learnings: “trust the process”. I entered this project with a set plan of what would happen and how I would make change. Things didn't go as I planned, thankfully. I say, thankfully, because it forced me to reflect and see that my plan for my praxis project was not self-reflective. Rather it focused on deficits. It was filled with assumptions of what would help and reflected a banking model of education (toward the volunteers) where I would teach everyone. I was forced to reevaluate and turn to those who would be continuing this work, the young people who are our students and Core Stages college volunteers. From each volunteer and teen, I learned a lot.

From Cora, the student who often pushed back on the volunteers and was often the loudest with the most energy, I learned to try new things and take the risk. She always would be the first to go up to participate in a new game or to start a conversation off and gave a lot to the group while challenging the volunteers. From Christian, a student who was consistently labeled as misbehaving and would yell out and receive a “strike” nearly every week. I learned the importance of relationships, adapting and challenging assumptions. When other volunteers and I began to have one-on-one conversations with Christian we learned about his passion and talent for painting and music and his struggles to focus, much like my own. For him, he needed more time to take breaks and the opportunity to help teach lessons, such as a lesson on ukuleles. From Genesis I learned to listen, ask questions and show love and care. Genesis, though quiet, would always ask questions about those around her. In our interview she often reversed questions I was asking and wanted to hear about what was important to me. She remembered everything you would say and always referred to Core Stage as part of her “school family” that would always care about her. Liam (volunteer) taught me to ask for help and include those around me, Sophia

taught me to think outside of the box and Jessica, Core Stage's Executive Director, taught me to trust.

From other volunteers and students, I learned too many things to name, but overall, I learned more about culture and language, patience, leadership and growth. The circular motion of the praxis cycle helped me to reflect and see things I could have done differently and the plenty of times I slipped up, all of which I believe made me a better educator.

Both Core Stage as a program, and myself as an individual, are beginning a long, self-reflective process towards creating a culturally sustaining space and creating lasting change. While I can't guarantee that my project or any aspects of it will continue beyond my departure, I will trust the process and continue to be self-reflective with the goal of continuing this work in different organizations and spaces, in order to create a culturally sustaining classroom and/or art-based space in the future. We're on our way down a never-ending process of constant improvement.

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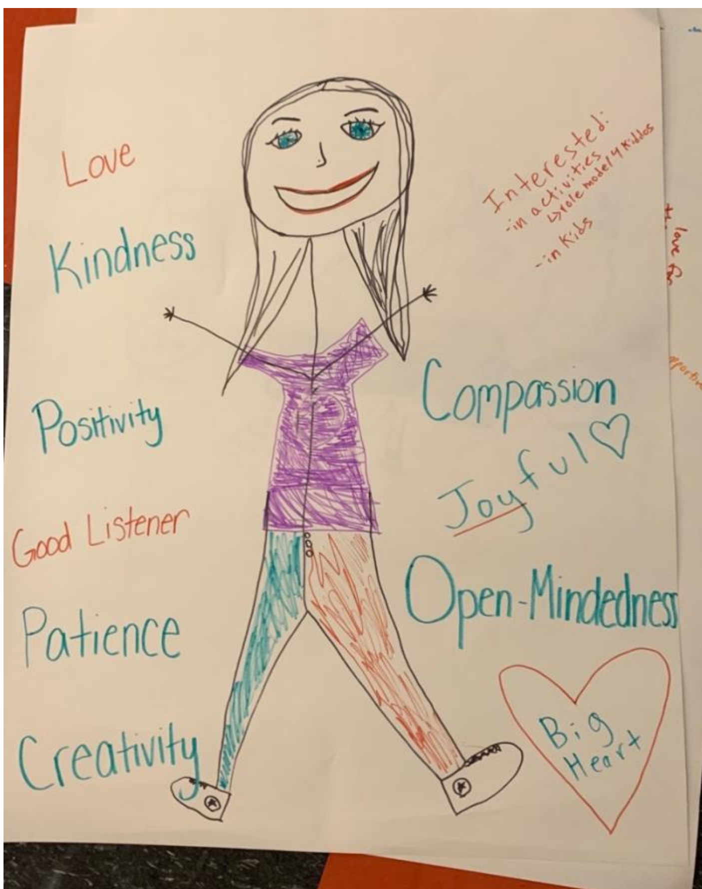
APPENDICES

The following appendices are examples (in the form of pictures) of activities done in training and during programming.

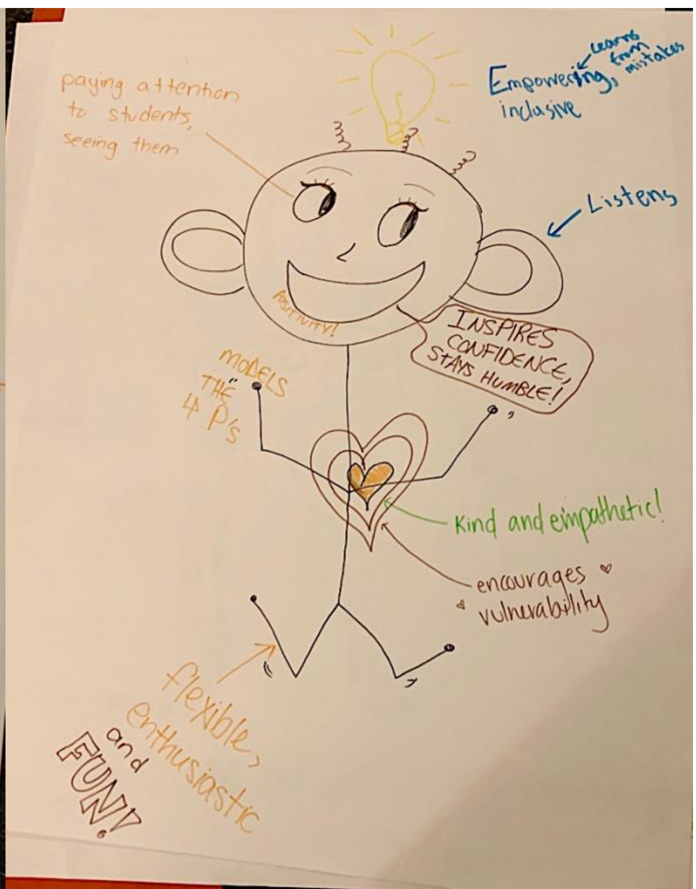
Appendix A

Create A Youth Worker Activity

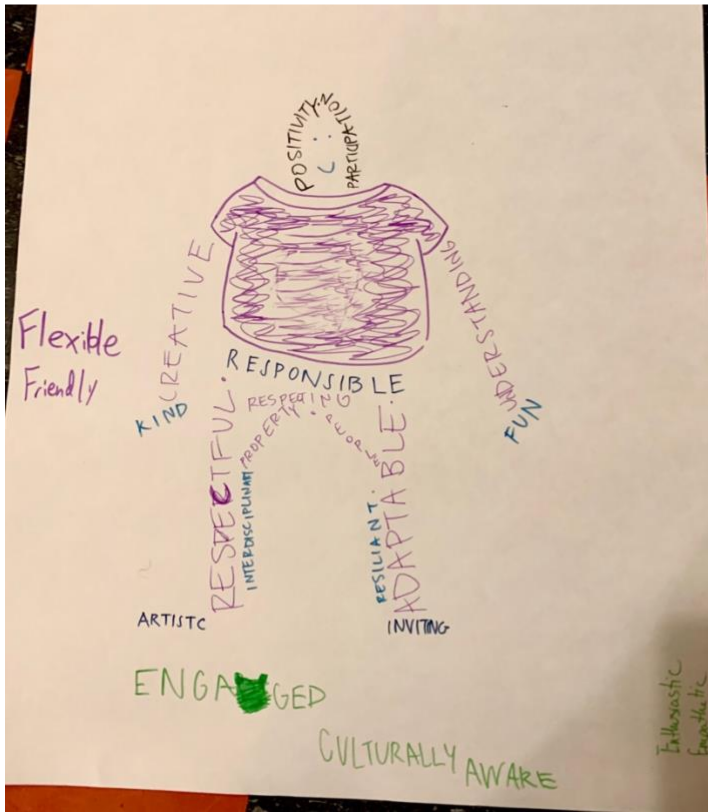
In this training activity, Core Stage volunteers were asked to draw the perfect youth worker. Below are examples of their drawings and ideas:

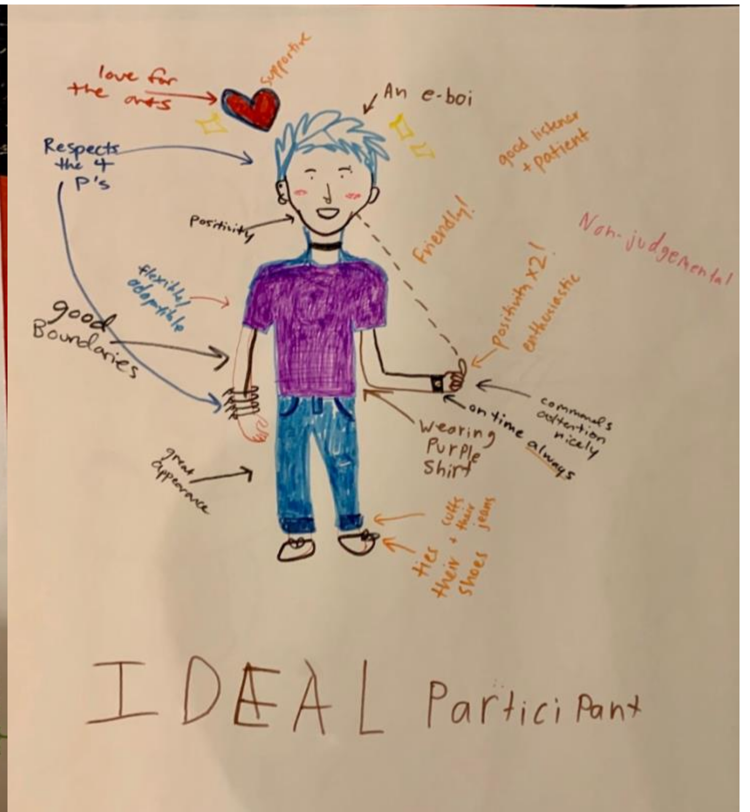


Group 1



Group 2





Group 3   *Group 4*

Appendix B:

Co-Created Curriculum:

Volunteers and teens were asked to work together to fill out the below template in groups of four to six (two volunteers per group). The template for curriculum creation was created in tandem with Sophia, a volunteer and Jessica, the executive director. We also offered copies in Spanish.

Create A Lesson

Names:
Grade:
Art Topic:

What are some creative activities that you are interested in?

TWO POSSIBLE LESSON IDEAS:

IDEA #1	IDEA #2
Why would you like to teach this activity?	Why would you like to teach this activity?
What are your students going to learn about?	What are your students going to learn about?
What materials are needed?	What materials are needed?
Draw a prototype for this activity:	Draw a prototype for this activity:

Narrowing it Down:
For your activities, think critically about your *IDEA!*

Which one of your ideas do you think would keep most of the students engaged?

Which idea will be easier and most effective at getting your message to your students?

Map out how you would utilize 30 minutes of activity time:
5 minutes in

10 minutes in

20 minutes in

30 minutes in

As a teacher, what kind of behavior should you exhibit to teach your students effectively and create a role model for others?

Is there anything you think might lead to errors?