

Ethnic Studies Pedagogy as CxRxPx

BY R. TOLTEKA CUAUHTIN

First, a persistence of faulty and simplistic conceptions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is must be directly confronted and replaced with more complex and accurate views.

—Christine Sleeter, from “An Agenda to Strengthen Culturally Responsive Pedagogy” (2011)

Ethnic Studies is often associated with *culturally relevant* and/or *culturally responsive pedagogy* (CRP), terms first widely popularized about 20 years ago by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) and Geneva Gay (2000). Some teachers wonder what the differences are between Ethnic Studies and CRP, and too often, the schools of thought are conflated or considered one and the same, which can unintentionally be detrimental to Ethnic Studies programs.

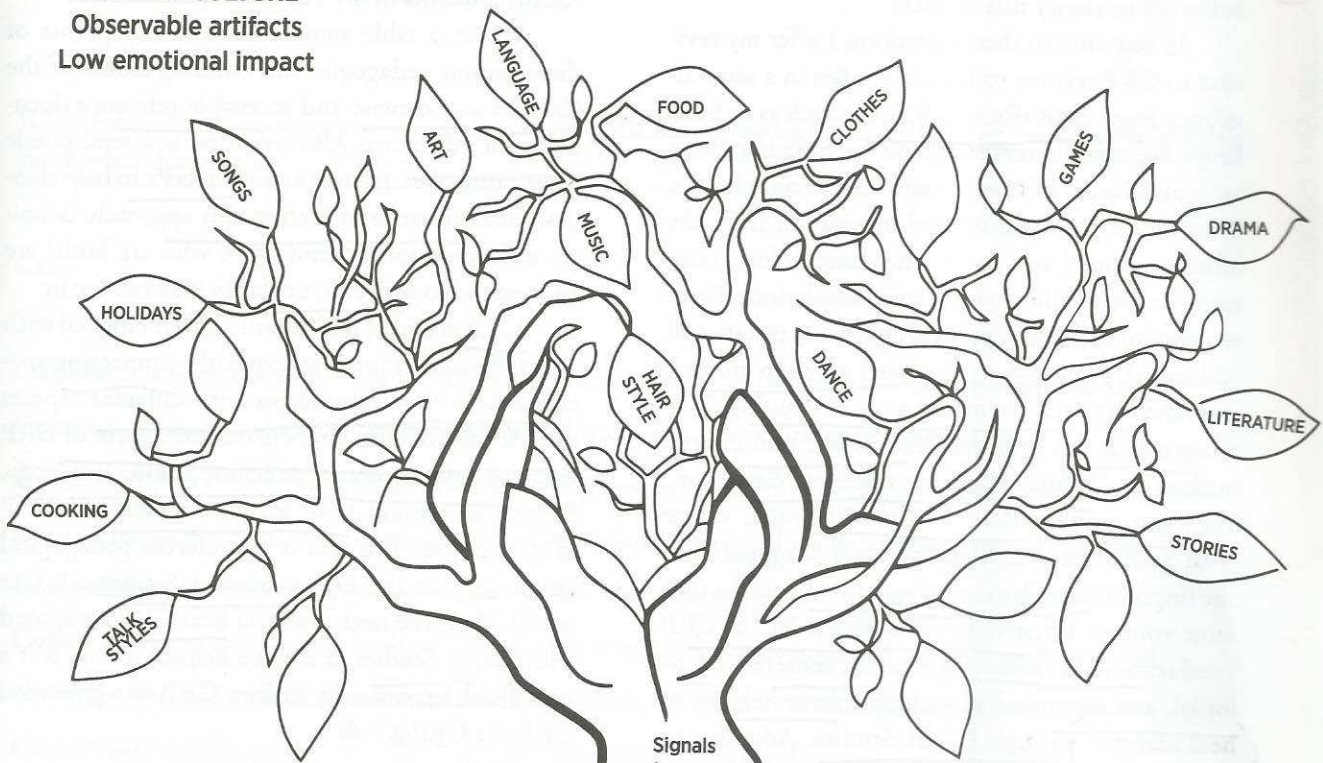
While surface levels of culture have their place in CRP, educators sometimes stop at that level, thinking the work of being culturally relevant and responsive with their students is complete. CRP itself has been found wanting, and critics have pointed out that it needs to be further grounded in Ladson-Billings’s original criteria and go deeper with culture. In her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Zaretta Hammond elaborates on the neurological explanation of why and how CRP works when practiced in a deep and meaningful way in classroom instruction and provides a visual to represent this depth (as shown on opposite page).

Given the potential shortcomings of how CRP is often used today and in the spirit of making connections with Ethnic Studies, scholars have integrated additional terms including *community responsive pedagogy* and *historically responsive pedagogy*. There have

also been formal proposals to respectfully and lovingly revise the terminology, stance, and practice of CRP itself: Django Paris, later in collaboration with H. Samy Alim, offered *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP) from his 2012 article of the same name to emphasize the necessity of sustaining the dynamic cultural and linguistic discourses students come to the classroom with. In Paris’ initial proposal, Ethnic Studies—specifically Tucson’s Mexican American Studies program—was noted as a robust form of CSP. Ladson-Billings supported this proposal in her article “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix,” which focused on hip-hop and community spoken-word events as relevant, dynamic expressions of youth culture that can be leveraged and sustained in educational contexts. Teresa McCarty and Tiffany Lee felt it was necessary to add a further revision to CSP for many Indigenous youth, proposing the term *critical culturally revitalizing and sustaining pedagogy* (CCRSP), since colonialism and acts of genocide, ethnocide, and linguicide have put many of today’s Native youth in situations where they are missing parts of their dynamic ancestral Indigeneity as human beings. Pedagogy that simply maintains a status quo of coloniality—what these students enter the classrooms with—is not enough; what was forcibly lost, stolen, erased, and replaced must also be revitalized.) *Decolonial pedagogies, pedagogies of love, healing pedagogies, pedagogies of authentic care, humanizing pedagogies*, and more have also been used in association with Ethnic Studies. Still, we are increasingly seeing Ethnic Studies equated with CRP. Does it suffice for Ethnic Studies pedagogy to be simply referred to as a form of CRP?

The Tree of Culture in Ethnic Studies Pedagogy / CxRxPx

SURFACE CULTURE
 Observable artifacts
 Low emotional impact



SHALLOW CULTURE
 Unspoken rules of interaction
 High emotional impact

Signals of respect and disrespect
 Conflict resolution
 Restorative practices
 Ways of working
 Ways of handling emotion
 Response to trauma
 Nature of relationships
 Personal space
 Nonverbal communication cues

DEEP CULTURE
 Belief systems
 Intense emotional impact

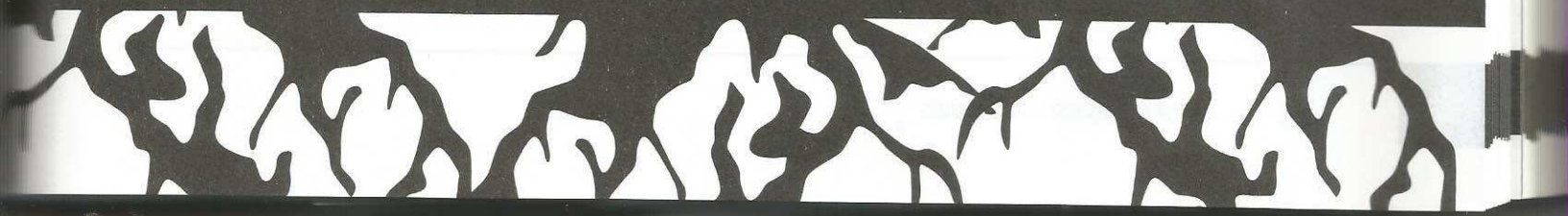
Decision-making
 Concept of self
 Worldview
 Definitions of kinship and group identity
 Cosmology (how the world began)
 Notions of fairness
 Preferences for completion or cooperation
 Spirituality and concept of a higher power
 Relationship to nature and animals

Indigeneity & Roots

Coloniality & Dehumanization

Hegemony & Normalization

Regeneration & Decoloniality



Are they the same or are they different? Must we still work to clarify this further?

In response to these questions, I offer my revision to CRP relative to Ethnic Studies in a semi-algebraic form: CxRxPx, or CRP-X, which as its basis keeps the same letters that have become ingrained with multitudes of teachers and education scholars. This is with gratitude for and inspiration from the aforementioned and those who came before, honoring Ladson-Billing's and Gay's foundations, Paris' request for revision (integrating his key points and additions), Hammond's emphasis on deep culture, and also inspired by many more, including Tintiangco-Cubales et al. in this volume and contributions in *"White" Washing American Education: The New Culture Wars in Ethnic Studies*, where both Sean Arce and Roderick Daus-Magbual note the importance of historical responsiveness. In that same volume, I first elaborated on the "R" in CRP as educationally medicinal, student centered, decolonial, and organic: Rx, with its role in helping to heal identity through Ethnic Studies. Adaptive to diverse student needs, it is a sort of organic anti-prescription to neocolonial education and emphasizes McCarty and Lee's contribution in relation to a

regeneration/revitalization of the Indigeneity of Xicanx students in my 9th-grade classroom.

Below, a table summarizes the key points of these various pedagogies and building blocks of the CxRxPx as a concise and accessible reference document for educators. Also included is a semi-poetic description of each letter in the CxRxPx to help elaborate the relevance of each in this approach. Scholars and practitioners (and those who are both) are encouraged to add, edit, or clarify it as you see fit.

CRP in and of itself should not be equated with Ethnic Studies. However, explicitly connecting specific Ethnic Studies concepts with different aspects of CRP via CxRxPx can help outline a form of CRP that also is representative of Ethnic Studies Pedagogy, helping to ground both Ethnic Studies and CRP in the process. This also is the referent pedagogical component of the Ethnic Studies Framework (see p. 65). Thus, the next time you hear CRP associated with Ethnic Studies, it may be helpful to ask, is it a superficial, historically shallow CRP, or a grounded CRP, the CRP-X? *

Ethnic Studies Pedagogy as CxRxPx

Cx:

Cultural, Community-Based, Critical,
Caring, Compassionate, Collaborative, Creative, Contextual, Conscious, Competent;

Rx:

Relevant, Responsive, Reaffirming, Revitalizing, Regenerating, Remembering, Restoring, Realizing,
Roots, Racial Identity Development, Reflectively, Reflexively, Rigorously, Resistantly,
Reclaiming, Remixing, Reimagining, Repertoires of Reciprocal, Rehumanizing, Relationships;

Px:

Pluraliterate, Pluradiscursive, Power-Balancing,
Post+Colonial!, People, Planet, Praxis, Purposeful Pedagogies.



Ethnic Studies Pedagogy (ESP) as CRP-X

When Ethnic Studies is simply conflated as a form of CRP, refer to the CxRxPx/CRP-X for deeper understandings about what that means.

Cx:

- Cultural:** ancestry, home, everyday funds of knowledge of students (as holistic, linguistic beings) matter.
- Community-Based:** students' community and holistic community cultural wealth are assets.
- Critical:** students challenge systems of power and oppression, social inequities, historical amnesia.
- Caring:** teachers authentically care and commit to students, helping them to authentically care and be
- Compassionate:** with empathy in action rather than mere sympathy, solidarity rather than charity.
- Collaborative:** collective decision-making, working together for these goals with intentionality and soul.
- Creative:** dynamic, multidimensional, outside of the box, thinking, interpreting, working expressively.
- Contextual:** storify; gamify; socialize it; the settings matter, affecting the energy, connectively;
- Conscious:** conscientization, growing a counterhegemonic critical consciousness as leaders, necessarily.
- Competent:** the ability and actualization of putting this all into praxis (reflection + action) skillfully.

Rx:

- Relevant:** related to students as holistic human beings, with deep roots, dynamic presents, and futures.
- Responsive:** responsive to who students are, where they're at, and what they have to work with daily.
- Reaffirming:** sustaining, validating, appreciating, and celebratory to who students are as human beings.
- Revitalizing:** when more than sustaining is needed; life, livelihood, liveliness, vitality is awakened by
- Regenerating:** currents of energy and ancestral memory of "stolen generations" courageously.
- Remembering:** students are temporal-spatial, intergenerational hxrstorically responsive beings.
- Revealing:** cultural genocide in the ancestral legacies of many Students of Color, demasking hegemony.
- Restoring:** helping to heal and make whole again, restorative justice, humanizing;
- Realizing:** real eyes realize real lies. Realizing colonialism's effects and our holistic greatness. Realizing
- Roots:** the ancestral plane, its active presence and futurity. Ancestry, Indigeneity, Diasporic Indigeneity.
- Racial Identity Development:** understanding the pervasive social construction of race and our place in it.



Reflexively: in realms of social justice, neutrality is an illusion; the side that teachers are on may be evident,
Reflectively: as students and teachers, learning through feeling, thinking, dreaming about our experiences,
Rigorously: with high expectations of ourselves as intellectuals, with critical compassion and dignity,
Resistantly: transformatively, critical of oppression and motivated by social justice, knowledge + action.
Reclaiming: People of Color stories, narratives, legacies, knowledges, names, identities, and exponentially more.
Remixing: ever evolving and adaptive yet rooted and grounded with third-space synergies, and
Reimagining: how things can be, a world where many worlds fit, we are the change, representing
Repertoires: of practice, humanizing and growing these repertoires with dexterity, through
Reciprocal: completing the circle of community, transformationally, with self-determination,
Rehumanizing: preparation, instruction, facilitation, assessment; the glue between it all are the respectful
Relationships: holistically liberating through . . .

Px:

Pluraliterate: empowering students to read the words and the read the world, the universe is a text set;
Pluradiscursive: expressive in multiple discourses as creative scholar warriors and holistic human beings;
Power-Balancing: challenging asymmetrical power relations, transforming legacies of colonization;
Post+Colonia!: recognizing coloniality never ended, keeping posted on it, decolonizing knowledge daily;
People: that's us; who we are as human beings, honoring, respecting each other's dignity, humanity, and
Planet: relational with all ecology, from the place we are based, locally to globally, and beyond;
Praxis: in reflection and action;
Purposeful: we know why we're here, continuing to grow and learn every day, teach each other; Ethnic Studies
Pedagogies: involve much more than what is usually associated with mainstream CRP. ESP as CxRxPx!



A Few Important Building Blocks of ESP/CxRxPx

Gloria Ladson-Billings' Three Features of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

1. Academic success/student learning
2. Critical consciousness
3. Cultural competence

Geneva Gay's Six Dimensions of Culturally Responsive Teaching

1. Social and academic empowerment
2. Multidimensionality
3. Cultural validation
4. Social, emotional, and political comprehensiveness
5. School and societal transformation
6. Emancipation/liberation from oppressive educational practices and ideologies

Christine Sleeter's Three Areas of Concern in an Agenda to Strengthen Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

1. A persistence of faulty and simplistic conceptions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is must be directly confronted and replaced with more complex and accurate views.
2. The research base that connects culturally responsive pedagogy with student learning must be strengthened.
3. The political backlash from work that empowers minoritized communities must be anticipated and addressed.

Django Paris and Samy Alim's Sustenance in Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

1. A focus on the plural and evolving nature of youth identity and cultural practices
2. A commitment to embracing youth culture's counterhegemonic potential while maintaining a clear-eyed critique of the ways in which youth culture can also reproduce systemic inequalities

Teresa McCarty and Tiffany Lee's Revitalization in Critical Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy and Indigenous Education Sovereignty

1. Attends directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming legacies of colonization, involving a knowingness of the colonizer, as well as a struggle for self-determination
2. Recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization (focusing on language education policy and practice)
3. Recognizes the need for community-based accountability, with the "Four R's": respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and the importance of community relationships

Tintiangco-Cubales et al.'s Community Responsive Pedagogy

1. Developing critical consciousness
2. Developing agency through direct community experience
3. Growing transformative leaders

Daus-Magbual's Historically Responsive Pedagogy

1. Critical hermeneutics (the study of interpretation)
2. Critical pedagogy
3. Community Cultural Wealth
4. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy



A Few Important Building Blocks of ESP / CxRxPx (continued)

The Ethnic Studies Framework's Double Helix and CRP-X

1. **Holistic Humanization**, respecting students as holistic beings: intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, relational; terrestrial, cosmic, spatial; intergenerational, temporal, hxrstorical; intersectional; multidimensional; community cultural wealth based; ecological; beings with identities and (counter) stories to share.
2. **Critical Consciousness**, standing against dehumanization; identifying origins of knowledge; critiquing the "master narrative" and claims of objectivity/neutrality (including "color-blindness") and highlighting marginalized worldviews; addressing cultural-hxrstorical, sociopolitical, economic, and moral levels of analysis; naming and confronting systems of intersectional power, privilege, and oppression; interrogating ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels of privilege and oppression; understanding geo-hxrstorical literacy and causality; cultivating critical hope and self-determination; nurturing critical solidarities for past, present, and future generations.
3. Interwoven through 1 and 2, recognizing relationships to the four macrothemes of a) Dynamic Indigeneity, Diasporic Indigeneity, Ancestry, and Roots; b) Coloniality, Dehumanization, and Genocide; c) Hegemony and Normalization; d) Regeneration, Rehumanization, Decoloniality, Transformational Resistance, Social and Ecological Justice.
4. Interwoven through 1, 2, and 3: Student Responsive; Academically Responsive; Community Responsive; Globally Responsive

All together and more = ESP as CxRxPx

- C: Culturally, community-based, critical, caring, compassionate, creative, contextual, conscious, competent;
- R: Relevant, responsive, reaffirming, revitalizing, regenerating, remembering, revealing, restoring, realizing, roots, and racial identity development; reflectively, reflexively, rigorously, resistantly, reclaiming, remixing, reimagining, repertoires, reciprocal, rehumanizing, relationships;
- P: Pluraliterate, pluradiscursive, power-balancing, post+colonia!, people, planet, praxis, pedagogies.

