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CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES

Teaching
and Learning
for Justice in
a Changing
World

EDITED BY

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We teach what we value.
—Gloria Ladson-Billings

Language and Culture as Sustenance

Mary Bucholtz, Dolores Inés Casillas, and Jin Sook Lee
University of California, Santa Barbara

Our multiliteracies operate in contentious spaces.

—Elisa, student researcher-activist

Spanglish is a skill, not a mistake.

—Isabel, student researcher-activist

For scholars, educators, and activists committed to culturally sustaining pedagogy, the U.S. public discourse on the education of low-income students of color ranges from disheartening to infuriating: The moralistic revival of so-called character education in schools for Black and Brown students, driven by a bizarrely influential study of preschoolers' willpower to withstand the siren song of marshmallows (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1999). The white elite's unflagging fascination with the thoroughly debunked notion of a "language gap" between poor children of color and their white middle-class counterparts (Hart & Risley, 1995). The establishment of militaristic, testing-obsessed, "no-excuses" charter academies for poor youth of color (Moskowitz & Lavinia, 2012), which so thoroughly terrorize students that they wet themselves rather than dare ask permission to use the restroom (Taylor, 2015). The racist and classist view of poverty as a moral failing, articulated by neoconservatives such as *New York Times* columnist David Brooks (2015), who, to take but one notorious example, gratuitously maligns Freddie Gray's character and educational attainment but neglects to mention this young Black man's horrific state-sponsored murder at the hands of Baltimore police officers.¹

As scholarly critiques of these and similar pronouncements have shown (e.g., Avineri et al., 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Giroux, 2015; Gollann, 2015; Lack, 2009; Rose, 2014; Smitherman, 2000; Zentella, 2014), throughout this discourse runs the common theme of deficit: the notion that youth of color lack the language, the culture, the family support, the academic skills, even the moral character to succeed and excel. But the true deficiency lies with such commentators, who—despite draping themselves in the

trappings of scholarship—rely on deeply problematic ideological assumptions rather than solid empirical evidence about the nature and experience of social inequality. As a result, advocates of the deficit viewpoint repeatedly fail to recognize not only the devastating effects of structural racism but also the considerable community-based resources available to young people to counter these processes in their own lives.

One of the most important yet most devalued resources available to youth of color is their language. Young people in general, and young people of color in particular, are frequently disparaged by adults for undermining their own “professional” self-presentation and even “destroying the language” by speaking in ways that are deemed “uneducated,” “improper,” “illogical,” “sloppy,” “lazy,” “broken,” and “ungrammatical.” Abundant linguistic research has demonstrated, however, that youth, especially those from economically, racially, and/or linguistically marginalized communities, are in fact innovative, flexible, and sophisticated language users, and that language is central to young people’s creation of their identities (e.g., Alim, 2004; Bucholtz, 2011; Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Paris, 2011; Reyes, 2007; Rosa, in press; Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2014). Recognizing the importance of language in the lives of youth of color, Django Paris and Samy Alim include the valorization of language as a central component of culturally sustaining pedagogy, or CSP (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014a).

In this chapter, we expand on the importance of language in CSP by arguing that the linguistic repertoires of youth of color must be sustained in educational contexts because language is a crucial form of sustenance in its own right, providing the basis for young people’s complex identities as well as their social agency. Our discussion is supported by examples taken from a social-justice-centered program informed by the CSP perspective. We focus on the experiences and insights of two Latina high school students within the program, who drew on their linguistic creativity and resourcefulness in ways that challenged widespread racialized ideologies of Spanish-English bilingual youth as linguistically deficient (see also García, 2009). As these students’ stories indicate, a commitment to CSP enables educators to recognize and support the agency of young people of color by working with them to sustain and develop their identities as linguistic and cultural experts.

In the title of their 2014 essay, Paris and Alim ask, “What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy?” They offer the following answer to their question: “CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change” (2014b, p. 88). Importantly, within CSP the concept of culture is not limited to longstanding traditional or heritage-based cultural practices that students participate in as members of their families and communities; it is these forms of culture that are the most visible to and valued by educators, leading in some cases to oversimplified or essentialist assumptions about how to bring students’ cultures into classrooms. Rather, CSP also encompasses

realms of cultural practice that tend not to be recognized as such and are instead often pathologized as evidence of cultural, intellectual, or moral deficiency: the newly emergent linguistic and cultural practices of families and communities undergoing often rapid change, as well as the innovative forms of language and culture that are created by young people themselves in peer interaction. In addition to sustaining family-, community-, and peer-based cultural practices, CSP strives to ensure that students gain full access to the practices associated with larger institutional and structural power as well as the tools to critique the processes of power.² In short, a pedagogy that truly sustains culture is one that sustains cultural practices too often excluded from classroom learning and leverages these as resources both for achieving institutional access and for challenging structural inequality. In this way, CSP fosters the full range of young people’s expertise and thereby has the potential to transform schooling into a force for social justice.

The motivating premise of CSP, then, is that *culture is to be sustained*. This premise rests in turn on a second premise, which is immanent in but has not yet been fully discussed in the groundbreaking work on CSP: *Culture sustains*. That is, it is culture, produced primarily via language, that endows experience with meaning and provides a deeply held sense of identity and social belonging. It is precisely because of the central role of language and culture in sustaining selfhood that there is a vital need for pedagogical practices that sustain students’ language and culture in classrooms and other learning contexts. For this reason, CSP is an especially necessary framework for educators who seek social justice for their students of color, whose sense of self is constantly under attack from schooling practices and policies that racialize and thereby devalue, distort, and erase their language, culture, and identity.

In the following pages, we discuss two examples of how, within a CSP approach, youth of color in a California classroom found new ways of understanding their language and culture as sustenance for their identities. Through this process, as we show, students not only engaged in transformative learning experiences but also undertook courageous and powerful agentive acts to advance sociolinguistic justice—that is, “self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language” (Bucholtz et al., 2014, p. 145)—in their school and community.

SCHOOL KIDS INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE IN LIFE AND SOCIETY (SKILLS)

The context of our discussion is a university–community partnership based at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 2010, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates have been collaborating with educators and students in the Santa Barbara area within a social-justice-centered program

combining research, academic preparation, and activism. This program, School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS), closely aligns with the goals of CSP. Since its inception, SKILLS has involved over 800 public school students from six urban, rural, and suburban municipalities in two counties on California's Central Coast. SKILLS youth participants have ranged in age from 6 to 19, with most of high school age; nearly all students are of Latina/o background, come from working-class families, and are the first generation in their family to be college-bound. Although the program takes different forms at each partner site, depending on the interests and needs of the participants, the overall focus is the critical examination of language, culture, race, power, and identity in the United States, with a central goal of fostering sociolinguistic justice. The 5-month curriculum guides students to investigate a variety of topics through original research and activism. The results of their work are shared both on the SKILLS website (www.skills.ucsb.edu) and at the daylong SKILLS conference held annually at UC Santa Barbara.³

The SKILLS program strives to achieve the goals of CSP in three ways:

1. By supporting and developing the full repertoire of cultural and linguistic practices that young people engage in with their communities, families, and peer groups.
2. By facilitating students' access to the language and culture of institutional power.
3. By guiding students to critically scrutinize and directly challenge social inequality or exclusion, whether in the practices that perpetuate institutional power or in those that they themselves employ and encounter in their everyday lives (see also Paris & Alim, 2014b).

To accomplish these aims in the classroom, the SKILLS program is innovative both in how teaching takes place and in what is taught. The program seeks to go beyond the usual one-way transmission of knowledge in conventional classrooms. Instead, similar to other proponents of CSP and related perspectives (e.g., Alim, 2007; Cammarota, 2011; Irizarry, 2009), SKILLS takes a youth-centered approach that emphasizes the agency, expertise, and self-determination of young people as researcher-activists and positions scholars and educators as learners alongside their youth partners (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2016; Lee & Bucholtz, 2015). The class has no tests, no exercise drills, and very little homework; learning takes place through discussion, activities, written reflections, and original research and community action projects conceptualized and implemented by teams and individual students.

SKILLS also differs sharply from traditional schooling in the content of its classes. With the guidance of the teaching team, student researcher-activists systematically explore a wide variety of issues regarding language,

culture, race and racialization, power, and identity that are directly relevant to their lives. These issues may include slang and youth language; translanguaging and hybrid language practices; language brokering; individual, familial, and community language shift; peer policing of language and identity; and linguistic racism, among others. Such topics are central to students' everyday lived experience and sense of self, yet they are rarely if ever addressed in subject area classes at the high school level, which by policy privilege written language over spoken language, academic language over everyday language, and English over Spanish and other languages.⁴ Thus the SKILLS curricula follow CSP principles in valorizing and sustaining students' own linguistic and cultural practices rather than only those prized by the educational system.

The two students who are the focus of our discussion participated in the SKILLS program at one of our four partner sites in Spring 2014. This site was Mission City High School's 12th-grade college preparation class for first-generation college-bound students. The 25 students, all of them Latina/o, received college credit at no cost for their participation in the SKILLS program through a partnership with a local community college. The class was led by two graduate student teaching fellows, Zuleyma Carruba-Rogel and Audrey Lopez, in collaboration with the partner teacher and a team of undergraduate mentors and research assistants. Each of the teaching fellows conducted original research within the classroom based on video recordings of program activities as well as ethnographic fieldnotes and other forms of data collected by the researchers and their undergraduate research assistants. The following discussion draws on chapters written by Audrey and Zuleyma for an edited volume about the SKILLS program (Carruba-Rogel, *in press*; Lopez, *in press*). Although our goals in this chapter are not precisely the same as those of the authors in their original work, we are deeply indebted to them for sharing their important research with us. Below, we consider the linguistic expertise and social agency of two bilingual students of Mexican American heritage, Isabel and Elisa, whose achievements within the SKILLS program were a focus of the graduate students' research.⁵ These young women's experiences can help scholars and educators to better understand language and culture as sustenance within a CSP framework.

SUSTAINING PRACTICES, SUSTAINING IDENTITIES

The examples of Isabel and Elisa provide two different illustrations of how CSP can sustain the linguistic and cultural practices of young people of color, and how these practices in turn sustain youth identities. In both cases, through their work within the SKILLS program the students discovered new ways of conceptualizing culturally meaningful linguistic practices that were

devalued by adults in their lives, and these new perspectives facilitated their use of language to publicly claim their identities as bilingual Latina youth. For Isabel, this involved the valorization of translanguaging practices and using these to sustain her identity in a community setting of mostly Spanish-dominant adults. For Elisa, learning that her linguistic practice of everyday interpreting between Spanish speakers and English speakers was an important topic of scholarly research provided sustenance for her identity in the face of English hegemony in the institutional context of her school.

Isabel's Spanglish Translanguaging

Our first example, focusing on Isabel, took place at a special Family Night event at Mission City High School. Because most of the parents of the SKILLS youth participants worked during the day and would be unable to attend the SKILLS Day conference at UCSB, Zuleyma, Audrey, and the SKILLS students decided to host an alternative event so that the student researcher-activists could share their ongoing work on a linguistic autobiography project with their parents and other family members. The student presenters were encouraged to use whatever linguistic practices they preferred in order to address their audience; most students presented in Spanish, and several presented in English, with simultaneous interpreting provided by bilingual UCSB undergraduates.

Isabel was the only student who chose to present her linguistic autobiography through what she termed Spanglish, the way of speaking that she most closely associated with her own identity. As a linguistic practice that creatively combines elements of Spanish and English, Spanglish is a form of translanguaging, which Ofelia García and her colleagues define as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015, p. 283). Because Spanglish does not conform to monolingual ideologies of grammatical correctness, and because it is usually associated with racialized Latina/o bodies (Chapter 10, this volume), this practice is often stigmatized by Spanish-dominant and English-dominant speakers alike as an indication of linguistic deficit in both languages. Yet Isabel’s oral presentation at Family Night was anything but deficient: She spoke fluidly and confidently, artfully weaving together Spanish and English as she wove together the threads of her life, from her religious faith to her passion for tattoos and cartoons, from her use of slang to a serious personal issue that she and her family were facing. The following is the beginning of Isabel’s presentation; although by its very nature translanguaging practices like these cannot be “translated” straightforwardly into a single language, we have tried to give some sense of her meaning. (Portions of Isabel’s speech that have been “translated” into English are marked with italics.)

Mi nombre es Isabel Sanchez, y- <looking at microphone> Wait, is this thing even on? Is it on? Okay. <Zuleyma: Le tienes que, le tienes que gritar.> Okay! I’m sorry! <laughs; Zuleyma laughs>	<i>My name is Isabel Sanchez, and- <looking at microphone> Wait, is this thing even on? Is it on? Okay. <Zuleyma: You have to, you have to shout into it.> Okay! I’m sorry! <laughs; Zuleyma laughs></i>
Um, es mi vida de my autobiography de linguistics. Y lo hace en inglés y español. Spanglish! <laughs>	<i>Um, <this> is my life of my linguistic autobiography. And I’ll do it in English and Spanish. Spanglish! <laughs></i>
Yo me considero mexicana-Mexican American! <laughs; audience laughs> So, eh, mi nombre que yo me considero es Isabel Carina Sanchez de la Vega Herrera.	<i>I consider myself Mexican-Mexican American! <laughs; audience laughs> So, uh, my name that I consider myself is Isabel Carina Sanchez de la Vega Herrera.</i>
Porque es el nombre de mi mamá, y de mi abuela, que tanto quiero. Pero ya mi mamá me dijo que soy Isabel Carina Sanchez. Y cumplí mis quince, cuando yo put up there. <looks at PowerPoint slide>	<i>Because that’s my mom’s name, and my grandma’s, who I love so much. But then my mom told me that I’m Isabel Carina Sanchez. And I had my fifteenth birthday, when I put up there. <looks at PowerPoint slide></i>
Yo me considero católica, que es San Juda Tadeo, y en esa parte, yo n- sé que necesito estar al respecto. No debo decir malas palabras, que eso es parte de una, parte que me ha considerado, (que me ha sido acerca con) el padre de mi iglesia. Ehm, Guadalup- Nues- Our Lady of- Nuestra- <laughs> Our Lady of Guadalupe! <laughs>	<i>I consider myself Catholic, which is Saint Jude Thaddeus, and in that area, I don’t- I know that I need to be respectful. I shouldn’t say bad words, that that’s part of a, part that I’ve considered myself, (that I’ve been near with) the priest at my church. Um, Guadalup- Our- Our Lady of- Our- <laughs> Our Lady of Guadalupe! <laughs></i>
Y me llaman Sissi. Porque mi prima Diane no sabía decir mi nombre Isabel cuando estaba chiquita. Y solo una persona afuera mi familia me llama eso. <laughs> . . .	<i>And they call me Sissi. Because my cousin Diane couldn’t say my name Isabel when she was little. And only one person outside my family calls me that. <laughs> . . .</i>

Yo habla diferentes terms, como con mi familia yo digo, "Qué onda," "Chales," "Qué on-" <laughs, points to mother in audience> Yo puedo hablar igual a la mamá. <laughs> Aquí I'm like, "Battle!" "What's up then?" Yeah. <laughs>	<i>I speak different terms, like with my family I say, "What's up?" "Hell, no!" "What's u-"</i> <laughs, points to mother in audience> <i>I can talk like my mom.</i> <laughs> <i>Here I'm like, "Battle!" "What's up then?" Yeah.</i> <laughs>
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Isabel's presentation involved translanguaging from the very outset, from her title PowerPoint slide ("My Life/Mi Vida") to her alternation between Spanish and English in order to manage the interactional demands of public speaking: Spanish for greeting her audience and introducing herself and English for off-record asides as she tested the microphone. But she put her commitment to Spanglish on record as well, quite literally, by announcing that she would be presenting her linguistic autobiography "en inglés y español—Spanglish!" This act of linguistic identity was matched by Isabel's acts of ethnoracial and national identity. Not only did she identify herself bilingually as both "mexicana" and "Mexican American," but she visually represented these affiliations on a PowerPoint slide that displayed two pieces of an American flag with a Mexican flag between them.

Isabel also showcased her linguistic dexterity in other ways. When she described the different slang that she uses at home and at school, she introduced this topic with the academic vocabulary item *terms*, which was part of the register of linguistics she had learned in the SKILLS class, rather than a more ordinary word like *words*. And she went on to offer a performance of her slang use that was rich both in Spanish and English youth language and in translanguaging practices.

Isabel spoke honestly, engagingly, and at times movingly; her utter fearlessness and her dazzling smile charmed the crowd, who applauded her enthusiastically. Yet in traditional schooling, in which whiteness and monolingualism are hegemonic, there is no place for this young woman's linguistic and cultural expertise. The rigid English-only policies of California's public schools, part of larger monolingual policies and practices in U.S. education (Fillmore, 2004), barred Isabel from using any Spanish in her conventional subject area classes to talk, write, or read, formally or informally, about her own bilingual life. Meanwhile, the only Spanish-medium classes available at her school, Spanish for heritage speakers, enforced a highly prescriptive variety of the language that was alien to most bilingual students and that negatively sanctioned bilingual youths' innovative practices of translanguaging.

Hence, Isabel's presentation was a small but significant political challenge to an educational system that rejected her linguistic knowledge,

enabling her, for the first time, to publicly and proudly display her expertise as a bilingual youth to an adult audience. Her agentic choice to tell her linguistic life story in her own language—Spanglish—was supported by Zuleyma and Audrey's teaching within the SKILLS program, rooted in the CSP principle to sustain rather than disparage young people's linguistic practices. The class discussion of bilingualism in particular made a considerable impact on Isabel: The instructors challenged the widely held ideology that translanguaging is a sign of linguistic deficiency in both Spanish and English and showed students that it is instead an advanced bilingual ability. This is more than a mere linguistic fact; in its acknowledgment of speaker skill, it goes to the very heart of identity. Thus Isabel's experience in SKILLS sustained her rich repertoire of linguistic and cultural practices and hence her identity as both *mexicana* and Mexican American.⁶

However, even when educators work to sustain students' linguistic and cultural practices, these efforts may not be taken up by other adults in young people's lives. At the end of the student presentations at Family Night, Isabel's mother expressed great pride in her daughter but also remarked that Isabel's Spanish was *mocho*, 'choppy,' not recognizing that her daughter's linguistic practices were not a deficient form of Mexican Spanish but a highly skilled and innovative form of California Spanglish in which Spanish and English are seamlessly integrated into a single whole (Carruba-Rogel, in press). This devaluation of Spanglish is common among Spanish speakers in the United States, for a variety of complex reasons (Sánchez, 1983; Zentella, 2007).

But what might be perceived as "errors" in Isabel's presentation are in fact evidence of language contact and change, normal and natural linguistic processes in any living language. Therefore, her use of regularized verb forms such as *lo hace*, 'I'll do it,' and *yo habla*, 'I speak' (rather than the Spanish verb forms *lo hago* and *yo hablo*), or her movement between Spanish and English renderings of *Our Lady of Guadalupe/Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* should be understood not as mistakes but as the innovative and hybrid resources available to advanced speakers of Spanglish.⁷ Such resources provide a strong foundation for developing further skills in multiple varieties of both English and Spanish, alongside—not instead of—Spanglish. The CSP perspective taken within the SKILLS program acknowledges the significance of young people's cultural and linguistic practices for sustaining identity without denying or downplaying the complexities and contestations that such practices often generate, both within and beyond community boundaries (see also Carruba-Rogel, in press; Paris & Alim, 2014b).

Elisa's Bilingual Language Brokering

Our second example of how CSP sustains identity by sustaining the language and culture of youth of color is taken from Elisa's experiences. Where for Isabel the SKILLS program provided sustenance for her identity as a

young Latina whose language differed from adult norms in her community, for Elisa, SKILLS offered sustenance for her identity as a Spanish speaker in the institutional setting of the school, where English was hegemonic. The two young women's situations differed in another important way as well: While neither the school nor the community recognized Isabel's Spanglish as a valid and valuable linguistic practice, Elisa's Spanish was acknowledged as a useful skill in both of these settings, since it provided a means of communication between Spanish-dominant adults in the Latina/o community and English-dominant adults in the educational system and other institutional domains (see also Valdés, 2015). Nevertheless, Spanish was not valued on an equal footing with English in the school context, as demonstrated by both policy and practice.

In the face of this institutional ambivalence toward Spanish, CSP sustained Elisa's bilingual identity by sustaining her practice as a language broker. As part of the SKILLS curriculum that Audrey and Zuleyma developed, they introduced the students to the concept of language brokering, or young bilinguals' everyday work of providing interpretation and translation services for family and community members (Orellana, 2009; Valdés, 2003). Because this was a practice that many students engaged in in their daily lives, it led to a lively discussion that extended over two class periods. During the second discussion, Audrey invited Elisa to comment on her experiences as a language broker. Elisa responded as follows:⁸

Well, I feel really happy that I'm able to help, because I've experienced it in so many ways. I've done it with my family, in school, out of school. And the one that I really like the most—I'm not saying I don't like my family, but I feel really happy that I do it when I go and interpret for other schools. For like the Open House, and the parents come and visit the class, and hear the teacher speak: "Oh, this is what the course is gonna be about." And the last time I did it, it was a first-grade class. And then there's parents that don't speak English. And I'm able to translate and interpret whatever the teacher says. So that they can get the message and get more involved in their students' education. Because I feel like without me, that wouldn't be possible. So I'm really happy that I can help these kids out, because you don't know what their future's going to be like. So hopefully I'll help.

Elisa's response focused on her experiences of brokering outside the home as a member of Mission City High School's interpreters club, a program that built on the expertise of bilingual youth by training them to serve as interpreters in educational settings such as parent-teacher conferences. This opportunity not only enabled Elisa to take pride in her bilingual abilities, but also to use them to help advance social and educational justice. Describing her experiences interpreting for the parents of 1st-graders, she noted, "So I'm really happy that I can help these kids out, because you don't

know what their future's going to be like. So hopefully I'll help." Elisa's characterization of her emotional experience inspired similarly emotional reactions from the instructors: Immediately following her comments, Zuleyma exclaimed, "You're making my heart sing! I'm so happy!" and Audrey added an emotional "Aw!"

In this situation, the instructors sustained Elisa's and her classmates' bilingual practices in a number of ways. They did so in the first instance simply by providing students with an academic term to name their experience and by recognizing the expertise required to perform the very demanding task of language brokering. But further, Audrey and Zuleyma also engaged in CSP by inviting discussion of students' experiences as language brokers and then emotionally validating such experience. This validation in turn sustained students' bilingual identities: Elisa's joy and pride in the work she did as a language broker—an emotion vicariously shared by her instructors—became tied to her identity as someone who could help others by virtue of her linguistic expertise.

If a CSP approach truly sustains the language and culture of youth of color, and these in turn sustain young people's identities, then the impact of CSP should be evident not only in specific vivid moments like those described above but also over longer periods of time. And indeed, the sustaining effects of Audrey's and Zuleyma's teaching were even clearer at the end of the program. For their final presentations for the SKILLS Day conference at UCSB, Isabel and Elisa formed a research team with two other students to carry out a project that they called "El Poder de Poder: Appreciating Our Linguistic Abilities" (the title translates as 'The Power of Power'). At SKILLS Day Isabel spoke of the importance of Spanglish for her cultural and linguistic identity, proudly stating, "Spanglish is a skill, not a mistake," and explaining that encountering this idea within the SKILLS program gave her a more positive perspective on her bilingual linguistic abilities. For her part, Elisa spoke with remarkable sophistication about her challenges to the school's hegemonic monolingualism, as she put it, which we discuss below, "Our multiliteracies operate in contentious spaces." The student researcher-activists' powerful presentations demonstrated to a large audience of adults—university faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, staff, and the general public—as well as to their peers within the SKILLS program that for these young people of color, language and culture provide essential sustenance for identity.

In fact, the effects of the SKILLS program's commitment to sustaining youth language and culture reached even further. Inspired by her experiences in Zuleyma and Audrey's class and with the support of her instructors, Elisa initiated a one-student political campaign to change the English-only policy of the school's commencement ceremony for graduating seniors. Elisa discovered this policy when she was selected as a commencement speaker. When she submitted the text of her speech in Spanish, school personnel told her that she would have to give the speech in English. Elisa argued that this

requirement would prevent her family from understanding what she was saying at one of the proudest moments of her and their lives. Under the school's monolingual policy, and in the context of wider racialized ideologies of English hegemony in U.S. society, Spanish was framed as at best a way station to English and at worst an obstacle to communication, not as a resource to be sustained or as a source for sustaining students' identities. The idea that Spanish could take precedence over English contradicted the school's ideology that Spanish is only appropriate as a brokering tool, with the end goal being communication in English.

Yet in the end, Elisa's persuasive arguments convinced the administration to change the policy. She gave her speech in Spanish, and an English translation that she provided was printed in the commencement program. This was the first time in the school's history that a student had been permitted to give a commencement address in Spanish; thanks to Elisa's work, all student commencement speakers now have the option of giving their speeches in Spanish. Her activism, and the work of linguistic and cultural sustenance that helped inspire it, thus successfully challenged a monolingual policy at her own school and paved the way for other bilingual commencement speakers to use their home language to celebrate their academic accomplishments with their families.

The experiences and accomplishments of Isabel and Elisa as researcher-activists within the SKILLS program illustrate how practices of CSP sustain young people's linguistic and cultural practices, creating a space in which young people's abilities are recognized and prized, and hence sustain students' identities. More broadly, such practices help youth to connect their own experiences and actions to a larger history of working collectively toward social justice for communities of color. For Isabel, CSP provided sustenance for her identity within her community by valorizing her use of Spanglish despite its differences from adult ways of speaking. For Elisa, CSP sustained her identity within the institutional context of the school by supporting her work as a language broker as well as her efforts to undo a discriminatory language policy. And for both students, the SKILLS program's legitimization of linguistic practices associated with youth and Latina/o identities challenged the notion of school as an English-only white public space (Hill, 1999). Thus, in sustaining students' language and culture within the classroom, CSP also extends beyond the classroom to sustain lives that are too often devalued by hegemonic practices and policies.

CSP: TRANSFORMING LEARNING, TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

In this chapter we have argued that language and culture are not only resources to be sustained, but are themselves forms of sustenance that nurture the identities of young people of color. For this reason, CSP offers a necessary

refinement of the earlier concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000). These frameworks, importantly, call for students' cultural practices to be central to the learning process. But where terms such as *relevant* and *responsive* position culture solely as the target of pedagogical practice, CSP connects culture directly to sustenance, as both its target and its source.

As deficit discourses continue to circulate and escalate, the dignity and humanity of youth of color are under constant assault in the U.S. public sphere (see also Paris & Winn, 2014). Young people from racialized groups have been framed—in both senses of the word—as lacking in the qualities and abilities needed to succeed in the educational system and beyond. Language has been a particular focus of such attacks, as young people engage in ways of speaking that do not conform to adult norms and so are dismissed as inappropriate, incorrect, and deficient. Educators are in a crucial position to challenge these pernicious misrepresentations by creating pedagogies that sustain students' linguistic and cultural practices. Such pedagogies are transformative not only of the learning process but also of the larger social sphere. When young people's language and culture are recognized as valid and valuable, and when young people themselves are respected as linguistic and cultural experts, then educators and students become partners in learning and in using their collective knowledge to bring about social change. Youth of color come to understand their language in a new light: as creative and innovative rather than “wrong,” as a powerful symbol of family and community belonging rather than as a marginalized practice. Sustained by this knowledge, young people like those we discuss in this chapter may act to dismantle the artificial boundaries that exclude their language from public spaces, bringing “informal” language into formal settings and introducing bilingual practices into monolingual domains. These acts of sociolinguistic justice will of course often be met with resistance—and such opposition makes educators' sustenance of youth agency and identity all the more necessary.

Thus, CSP is an ethical imperative for educators and allies of young people of color. To sustain culture is to sustain the lives of those who enact it, and, conversely, to devalue culture is to devalue the lives of those who enact it. It is in this fundamental sense that language and culture are resources to be sustained as well as sources of sustenance for identity.

NOTES

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1. The U.S. Department of Justice, which investigated the Baltimore Police Department for a year after the murder of Freddie Gray, found that the police department “engages in unconstitutional practices that lead to disproportionate rates of stops, searches and arrests of African-Americans, and excessive use of force against juveniles and people with mental health disabilities,” among other serious violations of the law (Grinberg, 2016).

2. As Paris (2012, p. 94) points out, these are also the goals of Gloria Ladson-Billings’s (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy, which serves as a key inspiration and foundation for CSP.

3. The website also contains complete curricula from various implementations of the SKILLS program as well as team research on the program. Elsewhere we discuss the process of developing and implementing an education partnership between university members and local communities (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2015).

4. By contrast, these topics are regularly covered in college-level curricula in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, fields that students rarely encounter even in college; such courses serve as the general model for the content of SKILLS classes.

5. By school district policy, the names of all students and schools have been changed.

6. Another example of CSP in the SKILLS classroom was the instructors’ validation of Isabel’s preferred term for her translanguaging practice, *Spanglish*, a label that some linguists reject (Otheguy & Stern, 2011).

7. While in Spanish verb forms change depending on the subject, a common outcome of language contact and change is to maintain consistent verb forms regardless of the subject. Thus Isabel’s consistent use of the most common verb form, the third person singular (*hace, habla*), should be understood not as disordered Spanish but as principled Spanglish. However, a fixation on grammatical form itself perpetuates racialized linguistic inequality: The dominance of the ideology of language-as-code over an alternative ideology of language-as-practice is one of the key reasons that normal processes of language variation, contact, and change are treated as deviant and deficient in educational settings (García & Wei, 2013).

8. We have edited and simplified the original transcript as presented in Lopez (in press).

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