4-20-2017

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(Re)Storying Ferguson: Youth Voices and Literate Lives

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A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the
University of Missouri – St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching-Learning
Processes

May 2017

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Abstract

This dissertation reports on a collaborative action research study conducted with Sioux Roslawski, a third-grade teacher in a Ferguson, Missouri elementary school. Sioux and I wondered how students might use words, images, and actions to shape a vision of their community space and its future in the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting. Situated within a critical-spatial and sociocultural paradigm, placemaking stems from understandings of place as culturally produced and interpreted, and, thus, capable of being re-designed in the interest of equity and social justice. The research methodology was guided by a critical qualitative and ethnographic approach, coupled with critical and mediated discourse analysis. Findings focus on how our efforts to engage students in placemaking were hindered by a school culture that positioned students as successful literacy learners based on standardized test scores and teachers as technicians of pre-defined curriculum. However, through acts of appropriation and resistance, students were (re)positioned as readers, writers, and thinkers. Using talk and text, students storied their homes, neighborhoods, and communities, and they tried to make sense of the civic unrest that took place in Ferguson in the summer and fall of 2014. These counter-stories reveal students' communicative competency and provided a nuanced perspective of Ferguson. This research has implications for how teachers can enact critical professional practice in an age of standardized learning and high-stakes tests. In addition, it shows how pedagogy focused on placemaking might help students, particularly those in marginalized communities, interrogate and celebrate their home spaces.

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Chapter One - Introduction

On August 9, 2014, unarmed African American teenager Michael Brown was fatally shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. In response, outraged friends, neighbors, residents, and strangers took to the streets in demonstration and protest. Attention turned to Ferguson as social media buzzed with questions and commentaries, while national media outlets tried to capture every moment. Reporters, activists, and the occasional pot-stirrer flocked to Ferguson to bear witness, take part, and record the unfolding drama. Amidst the cameras, demonstrations, and often violent encounters between protestors and police, there were also area school children who were starting a new school year a week late and trying to carry on in spite of the chaos that surrounded them.

The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri sparked protests across the country and contributed to the growth of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Within the St. Louis, Missouri region, it initiated debate around discriminatory housing, legal, and educational practices; prompted a Department of Justice investigation; and led to the creation of The Ferguson Commission—a committee of community leaders tasked with proposing recommendations to promote healing and positive change. Yet, largely missing from all this talk were the voices of young people. Moreover, in many area school districts, teachers were strongly discouraged, and in some cases explicitly prohibited, from having courageous conversations about the events with their students.

The absence of the voices of the children of Ferguson became a topic of conversation between Sioux Roslawski, a 3rd grade teacher in a Ferguson elementary school, and me. We wondered: How would children make sense of and narrate their

experiences as members of the Ferguson community, and how might their words shape a nuanced, authentic image of Ferguson, in lieu of the primarily negative, one-dimensional media portrayal? How could we help children to understand the historical and socio-political conditions that were a root cause of the unrest in the community, while also confirming and celebrating this place they called home? What ways would children discover to take social action, and might they come to believe that they could make a difference in the community? Moreover, what literacy practices might emerge from such authentic, in-depth inquiry around these issues?

Those questions prompted us to design and enact a collaborative research study during the 2015-16 school year. Rather than ignoring the material reality of the civic unrest in their community, we wanted students to write about, talk about, and design compositions that invited home and community spaces into the schooled space. We planned to engage students in praxis—"reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 51). Through cycles of research, action, and redesign, we hoped students would come to understand that spaces and places are socially constructed and thus can be deconstructed and redesigned (Comber, 2015). We wanted students to develop a belief in their capacity to take action for the better of the larger community, nation, or world. In short, we wanted to connect with students' out-of-school literacies and position them as placemakers through engagement in critical literacy practices. This type of pedagogy is framed in sociocultural perspectives of literacy.

Sociocultural Perspectives of Literacy

Sociocultural literacy scholars recognize that time, space, and culture all play a role in determining "what counts" as literacy. Early ethnographic researchers working

within this paradigm were interested in understanding what literacy means to people in their everyday lives and how they use it (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1985). Thus, emphasis was placed on examining literate events and practices that are shaped over time, rather than looking at literacy as a defined set of skills. This ideological model recognizes multiple literacies and positions literacy as a social practice, varying across time and space, and contested in relations of power (Street, 2003). Barton and Hamilton (2000) outline the following tenets of a social theory of literacy:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.

- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.

- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.

- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.

- Literacy is historically situated.

- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (p. 8)

These tenants provide rationale for challenging traditional, print-based notions of literacy and expanding what counts as literacy.

In defining a pedagogy of multiliteracies, the New London Group (1996) pointed to increasing differences of culture, language and gender to make the case that literacy pedagogy needs to "focus on the realities of increasing local diversity and global

connectedness" (p. 64). In addition, they argued that the proliferation of information and media technologies requires students to become competent in understanding and controlling significant modes of meaning making above and beyond the linguistic mode, including visual, audio, spatial and gestural modes. The conceptual framework for a pedagogy of multiliteracies includes four components: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Within this framework, learners are immersed in an authentic community of practice where they are instructed in ways that allow them to become critical consumers of text and also producers of text for various purposes, audiences, and across contexts

Gee (1987; 2011; 2012) explicitly links language and literacy practices with issues of power and identity through a critically oriented approach to studying language in use. One theoretical tool that is particularly important for understanding literacy as a social practice is the notion of "big D" Discourses, or socioculturally determined ways of speaking, behaving, valuing, thinking, and believing. Gee likens Discourses to an identity kit, noting that although we become socialized into many Discourses over the course of our lifetime, those which we chose to enact in a given situation have to do with how we want to be recognized by others. Young children acquire a primary Discourse in face-to-face communication with intimates in their social settings. Secondary Discourses involve social institutions beyond the family and extend the ways of being that are acquired through the primary Discourse.

Racialized Discourses of Accountability and the Hidden Curriculum

Just as literacy practices and Discourses are socially produced within cultural, historical, and spatial activity systems, so too are schooled spaces, practices, and

knowledge. Although sociocultural perspectives reject notions of literacy as defined by a neutral, universal definition of set of skills, critical frameworks recognize that some Discourses become dominant in educational institutions because they are intimately related to how hierarchal structures are arranged and social power is distributed in society (Gee, 1987). Indeed, the standards, rules of conduct, classroom organization, pedagogy, and evaluation systems can all transmit particular messages consistent with the dominant ideology with which students are induced to comply. Yet, these dominant Discourses come to be seen as natural and neutral, thereby legitimizing their authority (McLaren, 2003). Such hidden curriculum confers cultural capital to those whose values are most similar to the values of the institution (Giroux, 1988). Thus, through everyday interactions and expectations within the school day, the hidden curriculum works to socialize children to enter the workforce of capitalism (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Garcia & De Lissovoy, 2013).

Neoliberal education reform efforts have taken hold in schools such that they act as a form of hidden curriculum. Cloaked in discourses of discourses of efficiency, consumerism, choice, and accountability, the neoliberal agenda ascribes market-based principles to educational institutions. Within this model, schools are characterized as businesses, with teachers as the workers and students as the commodities (Ayers & Ayers, 2011). Under the guise of accountability, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) was passed with bipartisan support. NCLB put into place mandated standardized testing, a mechanism presumably designed to monitor and eliminate the large disparities that exist between achievement scores of white students versus black and Latino/a students on measures of academic proficiency (Lee, 2006). Yet, not only have

standardized tests often been found to be biased against students of color, they also serve

to dehumanize by reducing complex identities and learning behaviors to a single score,

which is then used to compare and commodify schools (De Lissovoy & McLaren, 2003).

Although the educational reform movement is disguised in discourses of social

mobility, it conceals the interests of the dominate class who benefit from a social

reproduction of the labor force and the ideological legitimation of the social order.

According to Nygreen (2013):

> Rather than facilitating mobility, the impact of curricular standardization has
>
> arguably been to reify social and educational hierarchies while strengthening the
>
> appearance of equal opportunity: the more curriculum is standardized—offering
>
> the 'same' content to all students—the easier is becomes to determine 'better' and
>
> 'worse' performances and thus to produce a ranked hierarchy of
>
> achievement….This dual process of simultaneous curricular standardization and
>
> stratification can be summarized as a process of *educational hierarchization*. (p.
>
> 42)

Promoting a standard curriculum while simultaneously ignoring social factors that might

contribute to educational inequity perpetuates the dominant ideology of *meritocracy*,

namely the belief that achievement rests solely in the individual as a result of his or her

natural abilities and motivation to succeed (MacLeod, 2001). Under such assumptions,

poor student achievement is attributed to failing schools, inadequate teachers,

dysfunctional families, and low effort or ability on the part of students. Thus, educational

hierarchization results in a deficit-based narrative of a broken educational (and social)

system in need of fixing, which provides rationale for promoting market-based reforms,

which are then rationalized as serving the public good. This "solution" to the perceived "crisis" in education and features "closing 'failing' public schools or handing them over to corporate-style 'turnaround' organizations, expanding school 'choice' and privately run but publicly funded charter schools, weakening teacher unions, and enforcing top-down accountability and incentivized performance targets on schools, classrooms, and teachers" (Lipman, 2011b, p. 116). Not surprisingly, the education reform restructuring efforts are primarily centered in low-income, urban, communities of color (Lipman, 2004). Yet, these restructuring and accountability measures ignore the social and cultural factors that create social imbalances in the first place.

Ladson-Billings (2006) asserts that the racial achievement gap is an inevitable outcome of the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society. Drawing on work by scholars of critical race theory, Gillborn (2005) argues that because race inequity and racism are fundamental characteristics of the educational system, education policy itself is an act of white supremacy. Indeed, the structural and systematic forms of racism that are present in all societal institutions are hidden in these neoliberal reform efforts. Often under the guise of "best practices," classroom management procedures are used to discipline bodies, school schedules limit freedom to "maximize learning time," and pedagogy is stripped down to a teach-to-the-test mentality to presumably improve test scores for low-performing students. According to Garcia and De Lissovoy (2013), "The hidden curriculum of the school simultaneously controls and injures students [of color] by restructuring the school day as a series of low-intensity pedagogical assaults, constructing students as always potentially transgressive and always in need of punishment" (p. 66). Thus, students become conditioned to accept

either the servility and obedience to management required of the low-wage worker or

they become pathologized and criminalized, set on a path to the criminal justice system.

Various scholars have studied and explicated the link between the fight to control

the space of the city and neoliberal education and municipal policies (e.g. Buras, 2015;

Gulson, 2006; Harvey, 2008; Lipman, 2004, 2011a). The contested space of the city of

Ferguson and the ways in which racialized discourses of accountability impact the space

of the classroom are both focal issues that undergird this study. Thus, I turn to a

discussion of critical spatial theory before providing an outline of our broad pedagogical

framework that extends from said theoretical underpinnings.

Critical Spatial Theory

Scholars are increasingly recognizing space/spatiality as an important ontological

consideration, signaling a "spatial turn" in critical social theory. Key thinkers in this

paradigm attend to the ways in which place and space play an important role in shaping

cultural, social, economic, and political life (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011). This spatial turn

is not intended to relegate space/spatiality as more important than history or society, but

rather to assert that space matters, avoiding the characterization of space as simply a

fixed surface on which history occurs. Thus, Lefebvre (1991) contends that spatiality,

historicality, and sociality form the trialectics of being.

In attending to the trialectics of being, theorists examine the ways in which space

is created through practices over time and interactions among social actors within

particular cultural and political milieus. Massey (2005) outlines three propositions that

connect the spatial with the social, cultural and political. First, space is the product of

interrelations, in which identities/subjectivities are both constituted in space and, through

interaction, come together to mutually constitute space. Second, space is a sphere of coexisting heterogeneity, allowing for a fuller recognition of the "simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell" (p. 11). Finally, space is always in the process of being made, leaving open the possibility of the radical openness of the future.

Massey's propositions about space lay the groundwork for the social production of space. Lefebvre (1991), for example, attended to the ways in which space is constituted through everyday practices (perceived space) both within and apart from the institutional discourses of authority through which said spaces are materialized (conceived space). In other words, even as the official written rules or laws that are associated with a given space seem to set parameters on what actions can or should be taken in that space, the everyday practices of the social actors within in and outside of that space come together to create a fully human lived space which has the potential to disrupt both routine practices and the official discourses. Thus, space is never fully formed, yet its production is limited by social practices and discourses that circulate.

Identities and subjectivities in space. A theory of space as socially produced must contend with the ways in which social identities and subjectivities are constituted in space, and, in turn, contribute to the shaping of said space. Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice can help to explain the ways in which identities emerge through everyday practices within social relations in social spaces. He argues that social identities and practices are not determined by spatial and social structures alone. Yet, he neither believes that the ways in which one narrates and performs identity is completely open to free will or the conscious deliberate intention of the author. Instead, according to

Bourdieu (1977), one's actions are indicative of their habitus, or "systems of durable,

transposable dispositions" (p. 72) that are produced via social structures within particular

types of environments, including home and school. These dispositions are embodied as

actions with a history, inherited in social spaces, that condition bodily movements, tastes,

and judgments according to class position, which, in turn, help to confer different forms

of capital—including economic, cultural, social—upon social actors (Bourdieu, 1984;

1998). The habitus of individuals is expressed and reproduced within social and

institutional networked spaces, what Bourdieu (1998) refers to as 'fields' which are

variably impacted by systems of power.

Distribution of power. For Bourdieu (1986; 1998), power is expressed through

the various forms of capital that social actors possess and what he calls the "field of

power." Economic capital is that which leads directly to money or property. Cultural

capital can be embodied in the form of dispositions of mind and body (e.g. ways of

speaking, dressing, acting, etc.) or it can be objectified in the form of cultural goods (e.g.

books, art, technology, etc.). It can also be institutionalized in the form of educational

credentials. Cultural capital can lead to economic capital. Likewise, economic capital can

help to ensure cultural capital. Each of these forms are also connected with social capital,

or the social connections that one has. Access to different forms of capital create

hierarchies of power and lead to symbolic capital, or that which is perceived as valuable

simply through its recognition as such. Moreover, across different fields, social actors

occupy different positions in social space, which helps to explain why one might

experience power differently depending on what field they are in at a given moment.

The "field of power" can be understood in terms of the state (i.e. a governing institution). Bourdieu (1998) writes:

> The state is the *culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital:* capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. (p. 41)

He described the concentration of each of these forms of capital as a "metacapital," which enabled the state to exert power over different fields and different forms of capital. Such concentrations of capital lead to symbolic power, or an expression of power that goes unrecognized by those subjected to it because it is perceived as the natural order of things and therefore accepted. Here we can see much overlap with Michel Foucault's theories, even though Foucault was much more structuralist in his thinking. Philo (2011) writes that the focus in much of Foucault's work was "on how human subjects are 'produced': on how their characters, beliefs, and conducts are profoundly shaped by the social and institutional settings in which they find themselves, turning them into thoroughly 'disciplined' citizens with little capacity for independent action" (p. 163).

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power can be likened to Foucault's (1977) concept of governmentality. Governmentality, like symbolic power, is a force through which the population is made into instruments of the state without their full awareness (Jenson, 2014). It can be traced from medieval sovereign power, in which states enacted and enforced laws, often by force or violence, to disciplinary power, which relies on surveillance, control, and the management of bodies and what they do. Such disciplinary power can be seen in modern day institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and

factories. Indeed, Foucault (1977) marked schools as one of the central regulatory institutions in society.

Drawing on this Foucauldian understanding of disciplinary power, Gore (1995) described various ideological and institutional structures, such as surveillance, exclusion, distribution of bodies in space, and regulation, which contributed to a pedagogical regime of power in schools. Likewise, Dixon (2011) examines Foucauldian conceptualizations of the exercises of power within schooled spaces to examine the ways in which children are disciplined to become schooled and literate subjects, as well as the ways in which such spatial identities are affected by the organization of and practices in schooled spaces.

Agency and resistance. Attention to habitus help to explain how individual actions can only be thoroughly understood through analysis of the larger cultural milieu; however, individuals are also agentic beings who take up or transform practices. Bartlett and Holland (2002) contend that Bourdieu's theory of practice underplays the importance of culturally produced narratives, images, and artifacts in modifying habitus. Addressing the dialectics of structure and agency, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain (1998) assert that social actors form as well as perform within spaces of practice. Thus, "particular persons are figured collectively in practice as fitting certain social identities and thereby positioned in power relations" (Barlett and Holland, 2002, p. 14) and this social positioning becomes embodied as habitus. However, through the production of cultural artifacts, habitus can eventually be transformed as the artifacts become tools to refigure cultural worlds, thereby allowing for new identities to form.

Transformation of habitus is a dialectic view of agency that recognizes both the influence of social structures and the power of individual choice. It calls attention to the

ways in which agency is impacted both by identity (how one authors oneself to others

and self) and subjectivity (how one is constituted and positioned through social discourse

and activity), both of which are impacted by sociocultural relations of power (Holland et

al., 1998). Davies (1990) writes:

> An individual can be discursively constituted as agentic/powerful/gendered, etc.
>
> and can both act in terms of the definition of self so provided and subjectively
>
> constitute him or herself in terms of those discursive possibilities, or an individual
>
> can refuse to so act and to so subjectively constitute themselves. (p. 346)

Thus, the social actor is able to actively deconstruct non-agentic positionings in order to

take away their constitutive power and subjectively constitute oneself differently. Thus,

identities, subjectivities, and one's related sense of agency are constantly in flux and

necessarily related to lifeworlds outside of the classroom. As social actors move across

and within different 'fields,' or social spaces, they encounter different people with

different sets of habitus and different trajectories of practice, providing opportunity for

the continued production of space and transformation of habitus, as well as possibilities

to reimagine agentic positionings. These processes take place through both acts of

resistance and acts of appropriation (Perry & Purcell-Gates, 2005).

hooks (1990) more fully explores spaces of resistance, especially as they relate to

the formation of black identities and subjectivities. She asserts that multi-dimensional

black subjectivities can more fully emerge through counter-hegemonic cultural practices

that disrupt white supremacy. Yet, she contends that the space of counter-hegemony

exists in the margins, not in the center. Thus, she names marginality as a site of

transformation, a location of radical openness and possibility. She writes:

I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose—to give up or surrender as part of moving to the center—but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (hooks, 1990, pp. 149-150)

For hooks, then, the space of the margins is not imposed by oppressive structures but chosen as a site of resistance. It is a space of lived experience, formed in words, habits of being, and the way one lives. Indeed, it can be argued that the spaces of resistance that are formed in the margins become part of one's habitus. Thus, they contribute to the (re)shaping of the social space in ways that are transformative and agentic.

Pedagogical Framework: Placemaking as Critical Literacy

Framed in critical spatial theoretical understandings, critical educators commit to working to reshape institutional spaces in solidarity with those who are oppressed in educational institutions (Freire, 2000). Through critical pedagogy, literacy educators can facilitate transformation and social change by helping students to name and notice relationships among language, ideology, and power, so that dominant assumptions, which have come to seem normal and natural, can be deconstructed and reconstructed (Janks, 2010; Pennycook, 2010). Thus, the critical educator seeks to work *with* (not on behalf of) those who have been marginalized by the educational system to help them identify those forces that work to oppress them in the first place. Through their reflection on the conditions of oppression and workings of power, students develop critical consciousness (Freire, 2000). Yet, resistance alone, that is reflection without action, can be hegemonic in that students who simply resist the educational system (e.g. by dropping out or

disengaging) do not acquire the social and cultural capital to change their position within the economic class system (McLaren, 2003). Thus, it is imperative that students come to understand their reality critically, but also be empowered to use diverse identities and modes of communication as resources to actively re-create that reality. The social actor's ability to shape the spaces in which he/she operate contributes to an agentic subjectivity in which he or she is able to contest the forces of domination and engage in social action to transform social conditions (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1988).

Conceptually, Sioux and I relied on placemaking as a way to engage students in liberatory praxis (Freire, 2000) associated with critical literacy. Placemaking stems from the critical and sociocultural understanding that spaces are not simply empty containers waiting to be filled; rather, places are shaped by social actors through both our meaningful, lived, and everyday experiences, as well as larger socio-political forces (Massey, 2005; Soja, 2010). According to Schneekloth & Shibley (1995):

> Placemaking is the way all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live…Placemaking is not just about the relationship of people *to* their places; it also creates relationships *among* people in places. (p. 1)

In other words, placemaking is the process of creating and maintaining the places in which we live, work and play. This can include physical and material constructions, but also linguistic and mental representations. In both cases, the purpose is to engage stakeholders in a community in an understanding of how meanings of place are culturally produced and interpreted, and, thus, can be re-shaped and re-designed in the interest of equity and social justice (Massey, 2005; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995; Soja, 2010).

Research Purpose and Questions

Given the ever-increasing emphasis on standardized learning and high-stakes testing in public school classrooms, the challenges of implementing authentic, inquiry-based critical pedagogy are many. Our motivation to crack open spaces to do such work was driven by our desire to (re)position students as powerful literacy learners who believe in their capacity to use literacy in powerful ways and for powerful purposes. We hoped that students would create counter-narratives to an educational reform movement that routinely characterizes them as deficit through the high-stakes testing regime. We believed that students would find ways to reconstruct the dominant narrative of Ferguson that was created through the media. Ultimately, we sought to develop students' sense of agency to act in the world through engagement in a literacy curriculum that welcomed and responded to students' lived realities within and outside of the classroom.

With a focus on places and spaces of both the classroom and the larger community of Ferguson, our specific research questions were as follows:

- How did school spaces provide affordances and constraints to students' writing and understanding of Ferguson and the surrounding communities?
  - What effects did the accountability aspects imposed by the state/district have on students' engagement with social issues?
  - How was the classroom space constructed through everyday actions, and in what ways did this support or inhibit students' engagement with issues surrounding their community?
- How did students use words, images, and actions to shape a vision of their community space and its future?

- How did a curriculum focused on placemaking impact students' sense of agency to act on the world?

Orienting the Reader: An Outline of This Dissertation

There are six remaining chapters of this dissertation. Chapter two reviews relevant literature to situate this study in the larger field of critical literacy scholarship. Chapter three is an outline of the research design and methodology used in this study. The presentation of data and findings begins with chapter four. In this study, regional community spaces, district and school spaces, and individual home spaces all impacted the classroom space that was co-created by me, Sioux, and the students within the four walls of our classroom. Thus, the findings chapters are organized according to these overlapping spaces. Chapter four demonstrates how racialized discourses of accountability circulated throughout the school space; chapter five attends to transformative literacy practices which worked to reshape the classroom space; and chapter six focuses on the various ways in which the student participants storied their home and community spaces. Each of the findings chapters presents different slices of data so that the details of this yearlong study can be viewed from multiple angles. In chapter seven, however, I make connections across the chapters to more fully interpret the findings, address the research questions, and consider directions for future study.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

The work of sociocultural literacy scholars emphasizes the locally situated nature of literacy as a social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2003), thereby giving attention to the importance of context and place in determining "what counts" as literacy. Somerville (2007) outlines the following tenets of place-conscious literacy pedagogy: 1) Place learning is necessarily embodied and local; 2) Our relationship to place is communicated in stories and other representations; and 3) Place learning involves a contact zone of contested place stories (p. 153). However, the notion of situated or place literacies has been critiqued as being overly focused on the local and ignoring the ways in which literacy practices are mediated by outside, globalizing influences (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Thus, Prinsloo & Rowsell (2012) caution "to not lose sight of the understanding that communication is a socially situated practice while examining how space and place are shaped from without as well as from within, and from above as well as from below" (pp. 272-273). In so doing, they draw attention to the need for critical literacy to attend to both the spaces in and around the classroom, as well as those beyond.

In conceptualizing placemaking as critical literacy, I primarily situate this study within critical literacy education, yet I also take up issues of space/spatiality that have captured the attention of literacy researchers in the field. Likewise, I draw on cross-disciplinary scholarship in place-based education and placemaking. In the sections that follow, I separately examine and synthesize contemporary research in each of these overlapping fields to provide a broad overview of related literature.

Critical Literacy

Morgan and Wyatt-Smith (2000) write, "There is no one critical literacy, only versions, which derive from several confluent streams." Here, I draw on the four concepts in Janks' (2010) critical literacy framework—domination, access, diversity, and design—to illustrate each concept and provide an overview of the field of critical literacy. These concepts do not form discrete categories. There is implicit overlap among one or more elements in each of the studies; however, I attend to what is foregrounded as I examine the recent scholarship in critical literacy that has taken place in elementary classrooms.

Critical literacy enactments that attend to *domination* seek to make learners aware of the role that language and discourse play in the maintenance and reproduction of power relationships. Foregrounded is the interrogation of the choices made by social actors, asking what purposes and whose interests they serve and how language works to empower or disempower certain groups and individuals. Recent scholarship focuses on deconstruction of text, often around issues of social justice, with an emphasis on reader response (e.g. Hasty & Fain, 2014; Peterson & Chamberlain, 2015; Wood & Jocius, 2014). For example, Jones (2013) gives specific attention to the issue of *domination* in text deconstruction, demonstrating how some second-grade students had difficulty interrogating mainstream texts that positioned their working-class lives as "other," and, thus, needed to feel a sense of entitlement before they could position themselves as text analysts.

Access as a concept of critical literacy combines with issues of dominance to consider how educators can provide access to dominant discourses, particularly for non-mainstream students, while simultaneously confirming students' primary discourses and ways of being. Janks (2000) writes of the paradox this creates by noting, "If we provide

students with access to dominant forms, this contributes to maintaining their dominance.

If, on the other hand, we deny students access, we perpetuate their marginalization in a

society that continues to recognize the value and importance of these forms" (p. 176). A

study by Labadie, Pole, and Rogers (2014) shows the potential of increasing access to

academic literacy while maintaining a focus on issues of power and privilege through

emphasis on the construct of social class during interactive read-alouds in a kindergarten

classroom. Likewise, Labadie, Wetzel, and Rogers (2012) had a similar focus in their

examination of how book introductions in a second-grade classroom were used to crack

open spaces for critical literacy and scaffold readers' understanding of text. These studies

show the potential of accelerating literacy learning through critical literacy practices.

   While each of the studies cited in the previous sections attempt to engage students

with social issues related to living in a multicultural, pluralistic society, in Janks' (2010)

framework, the concept of *diversity* is realized through engaging multiple perspectives

and communicative modes within the classroom. A focus on *diversity* privileges

"different ways of reading and writing the world in a range of modalities [as] a central

resource for changing consciousness" (Janks, 2000, p. 177). This element of critical

literacy aims for innovation, inclusivity and creativity; however, if equity is not a focus,

then issues of difference can lead to domination and conflict, rather than positive change.

Stribling (2014) focuses specifically on the ways in which critical literacy practices

created an inclusive environment in which kindergarten students were able consider

multiple viewpoints, engage in thoughtful problem solving, and discuss difficult issues

revolving around difference. Long, Volk, Baines, & Tisdale (2013) also looked to

diversity as a productive resource as they describe how two teachers used innovative

practices to privilege traditions and practices typically marginalized in schools for the purpose of supporting achievement and broadening worldviews. Although the link with *access* is clear in this study, it was facilitated through an emphasis on diverse ways of being in relation to literacy.

Finally, productive power—or *design*—is a way to challenge and change existing discourses. Central to *design* is the concept of multiliteracies, which stresses that "students have to be taught how to use and select from all the available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning, while at the same time combining and recombining these resources so as to create possibilities for transformation and reconstruction" (New London Group, 1996, p. 177). Design was foregrounded in a study by Winters and Vratulis (2013) that examined how semiotic resources were remixed, layered, and embedded by one six-year-old boy as he assembled a digital world and critically represented himself within it. Kuby's (2013) study combined aspects of *domination* and *diversity* with *design* through analysis of students' visual depictions used to convey their understanding of Rosa Parks' bus arrest in Alabama. Likewise, Montgomery's (2014) study focused on third grade students' production of counter-hegemonic podcasts centered on issues of historical injustice. Writing workshop, too, was an avenue for *design* through multi-modal play (e.g. Ghiso, 2013) and a focus on social issues (e.g. Flint & Laman, 2012).

Spatialized Literacy Research

Mills and Comber (2015) assert that new ways of analyzing literacy research, as well as descriptions of the connections, flows, and networks of literacy practices across social spaces can be found in the spatial turn within literacy studies. Within such

research, various analytic methods are employed; yet, the focus is on language and

literacy practices as geographically and spatially distributed, as well as the spatial

dimension of literacy practices, including the social construction and politics of space.

Research examining notions of third space have been particularly productive.

Although this term can be seen across studies, it has been examined in variable ways by

researchers. In each study, however, the third space is imagined as a hybrid space that

brings together what appear to be opposing or binary knowledges or Discourses to create

a new space that is not simply a middle ground between the two original constructs, but a

new, transformed space. For example, Moje et al. (2004) studied how everyday texts

might be brought into content area literacy learning such that literacy practices might be

challenged, destabilized and expanded beyond those that are typically valued in either

everyday or schooled literacies. Rather than texts, Guitierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, &

Tejada (1999) turned to discursive practices, examining how the official script of

authoritative classroom discourse could be brought together with the counterscripts of the

students in ways that created new transformative spaces where enhanced literacy learning

could occur.

With a greater focus on spatial analysis, rather than discursive and textual

analyses, other researchers have drawn on Soja's (1996) notion of thirdspace to examine

spatial practices within schooled literacy environments. Sheehy (2009), for example,

analyzed firstspace practices that created patterns of pedagogy across an in-school space

and an out-of-school space, as well as the ways in which such practices were codified in

written texts of second space and to what extent thirdspace ruptures existed in each space.

Her analysis revealed the limitations for trying bridge out-of-school literacies in schooled

spaces due to the differential ways in which space is produced and maintained through

power relationship in schooled spaces (see also Sheehy, 2002; 2004). Rowe and Leander

(2005) engaged in spatial analysis built on the trialectics of spatiality—perceived,

conceived, and lived space—as they analyzed the embodied and spatial features of

literacy learning within a classroom literacy event—a dramatic performance. To do so,

they examined the material make-up of the classroom that is directly sensible (first

space), the discursively devised representations of space and spatial representations of

power (second space) and the forms that drew on material and represented space but

extended beyond them (p. 320). Thus, they provided a methodological approach to better

understand how literacy is linked with material, spatial and embodied practices.

Honeyford and Vander Zanden (2013) adapted Rowe & Leander's (2005) analytic

framework to examine how the spatial contexts that define and constrain students'

literacy practices and academic identities were reimagined as students bent the

boundaries of such spaces and their relationship to them.

     Mediated discourse analysis has also been used to study literate practices and

identities in schooled spaces. For example, researchers have attended to the ways in

which identities form and agency is expressed within interactions in early childhood

classrooms through the cultural tools of toys and multimodal compositions (e.g. Kuby &

Vaughn, 2015; Wohlwend, 2009), as well as how chains of mediated actions signal

literate abilities and identities (Wohlwend, 2014). Vander Zanden and Wohlwend (2011)

used mediated discourse analysis to reveal the ways in which routine practices and

procedural texts of school could help to reveal taken-for-granted assumptions and power

relations. Likewise, Mosley (2010) engaged MDA in the service of critical literacy to

examine the ways in which a pre-service teacher engaged with anti-racist pedagogy. Finally, dealing specifically with writing and composition, Rish (2015) draws on the methodological tools of MDA to analyze the ways in which distributed authorship, mediational means that are used as resources for writing, and shifting social contexts and positionalities shaped students' writing.

Place-Based Education

Emphases on developing understandings of place as it relates to classroom work are often are categorized as place-based education (PBE). PBE involves students in real-world problem solving and community processes through study of the culture(s), nature, and economic opportunities present in a given location. Though varied in form, PBE projects share common elements including: 1) the study of phenomena close to home as a starting point for examining more abstract and distant knowledge from other places; 2) the positioning of students as producers of knowledge, rather than mere consumers of knowledge; 3) a learning agenda where students' questions and concerns are central to determining what will be studied; 4) the positioning of teachers as experienced guides and facilitators of knowledge and skills acquisition, rather than expert knowledge brokers; and 5) a permeable wall between school and community that invites community members to take a more active role in the classroom and invites students to take a more active role in the community (Smith, 2002). Proponents point to enhanced academic achievement, growing appreciation of the natural world, stronger connections to community, and increased commitment to active citizenry as benefits of PBE (Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sobel, 2004).

PBE practitioners and researchers do not typically locate themselves within a critical pedagogical framework; yet, Gruenewald (2003a) points to clear areas of overlap and calls for "a conscious synthesis that blends the two discourses into a critical pedagogy of place" (p. 3) (see also, McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). Unlike other PBE models (e.g. Bowers, 2006; Theobald, 1997), Gruenewald's (2003b) framework of place-conscious pedagogy includes a specific emphasis on developing critical understandings of place. In giving explicit attention to the sociological dimension, he advances the notion of places as socially constructed and directly connected to identity and culture. Yet, because places are socially constructed, they are inscribed with ideology and politics; thus, through mechanisms of power and domination, places reflect and reproduce inequitable social relationships. Place conscious pedagogy, therefore, should help human beings to "(a) examine the impact of places on culture and identity, and (b) embrace our political roles as place makers" (Gruenewald, 2003b, p. 636).

Despite Gruenewald's (2003a, 2003b) attempt to develop a critical pedagogy of place, many scholars have critiqued place-based education approaches. For example, PBE frameworks often invoke notions of place as stable and bound entities, romanticizing ancient and traditional cultures such as indigenous and pre-industrial people (McInerney et al., 2011; Nespor, 2008). This serves to mask understandings of places as socially constructed and deflects attention from dimensions of difference, such as ethnicity, gender, and class, which contribute to the shaping of places. Additionally, PBE proponents (e.g. Bowers, 2006; Greuenwald & Smith, 2008) often describe place as synonymous with community. Yet, Moje (2000) problematizes the construct of community, noting that spaces/places can have geographic, psychological, and cultural

dimensions. Not only does this disrupt the idea of a place as a single, well-defined entity, it also brings to the forefront questions of what exactly is being studied in PBE. Thus, Moje suggests that educators turn to the practices of the people with whom they work to develop understandings of community and, in turn, place. Finally, McInerney et al., (2011), remind readers that the realities of life in particular places may not be idyllic and happy for their inhabitants, particularly for those who are excluded or oppressed. Thus, it may be problematic to expect students to develop connections to local places/spaces (e.g. Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sobel, 2004) when the physical, social and cultural attributes of said places negatively impact their ability to develop agentic subjectivities.

Beyond the *what* of PBE, there have also been critiques of the *how* associated with its pedagogical practices. First, in overemphasizing the local it is possible that PBE practitioners fail to examine and deconstruct the outside, global influences that impact happenings at the local level (Nespor, 2008). Not only can students learn much about themselves by studying other cultures, places and times, by privileging the local, the interdependence of places and spaces at various levels is obscured (McInerney et al., 2011). Nespor (2008) asserts that "an insistence on the primacy of 'the local' is a tool corporations and states use to subvert social and environmental justice efforts" (p. 486) by shifting responsibility to the locales their policies have helped impoverish. Finally, McInerney et al., (2011) caution:

> PBE must combine a respect for, and a critical reading of, the social institutions, histories, cultures and environments that constitute students' lifeworlds. In this context, the question of what needs to be conserved and protected may be just as crucial as the question of what needs to be transformed (p. 12).

Focusing extensively on what is wrong with the world, particularly given the limits of

local actors to single-handedly enact large scale change, can lead to feelings of

hopelessness. In addition, a constant emphasis on transformation can mask those aspects

of places/spaces that should be conserved (Bowers, 2008).

Placemaking

The term placemaking is drawn from urban planning and development literature

(e.g. McCann, 2002; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995). Those who are considered to be

professional placemakers typically include architects, planners, building tradespeople,

facility managers, interior designers, engineers, and landscape architects. Yet

Schneekloth and Shibley (1995) argue that the allocation of such work to a small body of

professionals denies the potential for people to take control over events and

circumstances that take place in their lives. Instead, their work brings together

community stakeholders to create a dialogic space in which understandings of and

purposes for place and spaces can be confirmed and interrogated. Through such

dialogue, multiple voices of stakeholders in the community develop a shared vision in

order to create inclusive public spaces.

Just as the construct of place is not easily defined (Gruenewald, 2003b), neither is

placemaking a singular phenomenon. There are a number of studies that focus on the

concept of placemaking as related to structures and built environments within public

spaces, generally from fields outside education (e.g. Imbroscio, 2011; Main & Sandoval,

2015; McCann, 2002; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995). In addition, there are a small, but

growing number of studies within the realm of education, including those that focus on

the design and built environment of schools and classrooms (e.g. Fisher, 2004; Parnell &

Proctor, 2011); cognitive and imaginative aspects of placemaking (e.g. Fettes & Judson, 2010); and placemaking in out-of-school learning spaces (e.g. Hackett, 2014; Heffenbein, 2006; Malone, 2004).

Collectively, this body of work has implications for how placemaking can be conceptually applied to literacy and language studies in the classroom. For example, there are studies that draw attention to placemaking as both small acts, such as placing a religious artifact (e.g. Heng, 2015) and large community events, such as festivals (e.g. Derrett, 2003), demonstrating that placemaking is not confined to the purview of professional placemakers in built environments. Indeed, studies by Sutton and Kemp (2002) and Taylor and Hall (2013) demonstrate the potential and capacity of children to engage in acts of placemaking. The contestability and evolving nature of places and spaces is highlighted in the work of Benson & Jackson (2013) and Reyes (2015). In addition, researchers have examined placemaking as a discursive act (e.g. Cilliers, Timmermans, Van den Goorbergh, & Slijkhuis, 2014; Stokowski, 2002) and as an embodied, performative act (e.g. Benson & Jackson, 2013; Myers, 2008). Studies of placemaking have examined concepts such as identity (e.g. Gill & Larson, 2014; Prince, 2014) and agency (e.g. Polson, 2015), which are also within the purview of literacy studies. Finally, research by Heng (2015) and Childress (2004) remind us that placemaking is not always an official, authorized activity.

Situating this Study in the Field: Placemaking as Critical Literacy

In situating this work, I attend to two overlapping ways in which placemaking can be conceptualized as critical literacy. This first draws on the notion of (re)making the place of the classroom by giving attention to the ways in which literacy and language

practices are taken up in such spaces. The second examines how classrooms and

communities are connected, and, thus, how language and literacy practices are actions

that can be used to re-imagine and re-shape places and spaces. Although some studies

refer to the specific notion of placemaking (e.g. Kinloch, 2009; Sanchez, 2011) and a few

describe their work as critical pedagogy of place (e.g. Comber, 2009; Comber & Nixon,

2008; Comber, Nixon, Ashmore, Loo, & Cook, 2006), most simply refer to their work as

critical literacy. Collectively they point to a vision of what is possible when

conceptualizing placemaking as critical literacy.

(Re)Making the space of the classroom. Comber (2011) calls for increased

attention to placemaking pedagogies, reminding readers that such work involves "careful

and collaborative documentation of how teachers working with different children in

different places contest dominant narratives and create alternative spaces for young

children to accomplish school learning and do positive identity work simultaneously" (p.

346). In this context, placemaking happens at the classroom and/or school level as a way

to counteract discourses of standardization and accountability. Studies by Paugh, Carey,

and King-Jackson (2007); Sanchez (2011); Campano, Ghiso, and Sanchez (2013) all

examine the remaking of pedagogical space to enact critical literacies.

In the collaborative action research study by Paugh et al. (2007), two teachers

worked with two university researchers to document what happens when spaces within

the official curriculum were cracked open to make room for students' development as

practitioners of social and critical literacies. During the yearlong project, the co-teachers

invited student ownership, innovation, and agency during a negotiated "Choice Time"

within the official district-mandated literacy block in a second-grade classroom. This

official classroom practice encouraged a remixing of social and academic resources, affirmed children's active participation in determining relevant literacy tasks, and allowed for changing social roles of both teachers and students as all students in the classroom community were called on to design and manage independent activities. This shared agency changed the physical learning space and expanded what counted as literacy within the classroom.

Creating spaces that encourage active literacy learning was also the focus of studies by Campano et al. (2013) and Sanchez (2011), which were both conducted at the same all-boys school in the Midwest. Sanchez (2011) and collaborating teacher, Ms. Rhodes, engaged second grade students in acts of placemaking through a focus on Harlem, NY as a site of African American culture by remixing a mandated biographical report on a famous American into a project that invited students to celebrate the creative and intellectual significance of the Harlem Renaissance Era. By remaking the classroom space into a community of inquiry and engaging students in a project that allowed them to take pride in their heritage, the second graders were able to position themselves as powerful literacy learners, a positioning that was shared with the school community through a collaborative celebration that made their research public. Campano et al.'s (2013) study describes the larger school culture, which created space for "organic critical literacies" to arise. In describing students' literacy practices, they write:

> When given the space to direct their own inquiries, [students] engaged in critical literacies that were rooted in cultural legacies….This critical stance was not something we explicitly taught or a pedagogy we asked the teachers to implement. Rather, we found that students' critical literacies were 'organic' to

their contexts…. This [school] culture was an essential part of the local

knowledge and intellectual soil that nourished the students' critical engagements

with texts and with the world. (p. 107)

In these contexts, placemaking was used as a way to reclaim and remake the classroom

and school as places where students could connect with their cultural histories and

knowledge as valued components of learning as a method for engaging students in

academic literacy; yet, the placemaking extended beyond the local through its emphasis

on the critical engagement with texts and places in the world and the public performance

that was shared with the community.

(Re)Making school and community spaces. Another productive line of research

that connects critical literacy with place/space can be found in youth participatory action

research (YPAR) (e.g. Fox, 2012; Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, & Scorza, 2015;

Morrell, 2004; Wright & Mahiri, 2012). These studies engaged students in critical

literacy to research community contexts and enact social change.

Kinloch (2009) refers specifically to "placemaking" in her ethnographic study that

focused on the overlaps between literacy practices and community contexts. She

examines how Phillip, an African American high school student from Harlem, NY, used

his video camera to narrate stories of change within his neighborhood, document historic

community artifacts, and contest positions and perspectives that favored the gentrification

of urban areas. Kinloch writes:

Phillip's various acts and activities disrupted how he came to understand the

community as a site of literacy, activism, and change instead of simply "a place to

sleep." Such a disruption encouraged him to resee the familiar landscape of

> Harlem as a space to engage in critical conversations that involve community
>
> changes (e.g., increased rent, renovated apartments, displacement) as well as
>
> practices in literacy (e.g., keeping a journal, listening to stories, interviewing
>
> people). (p. 328)

Thus, through multimodal composition and design, Philip rewrote and resisted the

dominant narrative of gentrification and used his videos to speak out against the changes

taking place in his community.

Comber, Thompson, and Wells (2001) engaged children in writing and drawing

as a way to problem-pose in relation to their community, an area of high poverty.

Through a series of questions that invited children to evaluate and imagine changes that

moved from the personal to the local to the global, the children enacted a complex set of

literacy practices in order envision and redesign an improved local environment. Through

the process they learned about the power and possibilities for local civic action. Another

participatory research project described by Comber and colleagues (Comber & Nixon,

2008; Comber et al., 2006) involved primary school students in the design and

construction of community garden in an empty space on their school campus. Through

collaboration with an architect and undergraduate students in architecture, journalism,

and education, children used academic literacy practices and also expanded their

vocabularies of spatial literacy as they worked together to create spaces of belonging.

Finally, Comber (2009, 2015) describes a third critical, place-based project called "River

Literacies," which involves students in study of the Murray-Darling Basin region, an area

experiencing severe drought and shortage of water due to climate change. Students were

provided opportunity to produce and publish artistic and print-based responses to the environmental issues gripping their area.

Expanding the Field

Scholarship on critical literacy teaching and learning has been increasing since the turn of the 21st century and can be found in at least forty-five countries across the globe, spanning multiple grade levels and disciplines (Rogers & O'Daniels, 2015). Within Janks' (2010) critical literacy framework, this study privileges the design aspect through our pedagogical emphasis on writing and multimodal composing. Yet, we also attend to aspects of domination, access, and diversity as will be shown in the findings. Likewise, research into spatialized literacy practices is on the rise (Mills & Comber, 2015). We draw on the work of researchers applying mediated discourse analysis and third-space analytic frameworks to literacy research. However, relatively few studies specifically emphasize the emergence of critical literacy practices with understandings of space and place (for exception, see Honeyford & Vander Zanden, 2013; Vander Zanden & Wohlwend, 2011). Thus, this study brings together two lines of research in a way that will help to inform both.

My choice to define this spatialized critical literacy research as placemaking rather than place-based education is purposeful. First, inherent in the term placemaking is the notion of places as made, or shaped, by social actors; thus, it avoids romanticized notions of place and community (Nespor, 2008), permitting for a larger understanding of space as socially constructed and negotiated. In addition, "pedagogy" in PBE often implies teacher- initiated and directed action (e.g. Anderson, 2011), and the singular "place" fails to recognize multiple and contested spaces within the boundaries of a

"place." On the other hand, placemaking, as a verb, puts the emphasis squarely on the action and leaves the actor unnamed. Thus, there is room to recognize multiple perspectives and an understanding that places and spaces are contested, leaving open the notion that placemaking happens in spaces of resistance as well as in those place that are authorized by the teacher.

The concept of placemaking is borrowed from urban planning and development literature. Thus, school-based literacy research focused on community placemaking at the elementary level is not widespread (for exceptions see, Comber, 2015; Sanchez, 2011). Powerful though they are in their documentation of social action, the aforementioned YPAR studies and Kinloch's (2009) research all include high-school aged participants. Moreover, not all have a specific connection to the classroom. In contrast, studies that are located in elementary schools tend to describe social action within critical literacy at the school level. For example, Gatto (2013); Enciso (2011); and Heffernan and Lewison (2005) all report on studies in which critical literacy practices encouraged students to reshape spaces and practices in the lunchroom and/or the hallways. However, the work of Comber and colleagues out of Australia demonstrates the potential of including elementary school children in acts of placemaking at multiple levels, both materially and linguistically, as a way to engage them fully in critical and academic literacies. Thus, this study builds on the work of Comber (2015) in exploring pedagogies of possibility and attempts to expand upon the limited number of studies that invite the students to examine their role as placemakers in schools and communities.

Chapter Three – Research Design and Methodology

This dissertation reports on a collaborative action research study conducted in the third-grade classroom of Sioux Roslawski during the 2015-16 school year. Action research in education is not simply research *on* or *about* education conducted by experts outside of the educational institutional; rather, it is a participatory, collaborative endeavor rooted *in* real educational practices *for* and *with* participants in educational settings (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Herr & Anderson, 2015). According to Carr & Kemmis (1986):

> Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (p.162)

As such, it is inherently rooted in the local context, privileging the knowledge of local practitioners, and blurring the lines between inquiry and practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Beginning with a line of inquiry or problem of practice, action researchers follow an emergent, cyclical research design that revolves around the iterative processes of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Lewin, 1948).

Research Design

Although action research can be designed around any number of methodologies or forms of inquiry (Pine 2009), this research is situated within a critical qualitative research framework (Carspecken, 1996; Merriam, 2009). Critical research is primarily concerned with issues of power and it has critique, transformation, and empowerment as its goals. Merriam (2009) writes, "Critical qualitative research…raises questions about how power relations advance the interests of one group while oppressing those of other

groups, and the nature of truth and the construction of knowledge" (p. 35). Critical

research is characterized by the value orientation of the researcher and the principles of

critical epistemology. In terms of values, Carspecken (1996) writes, "Criticalists find

contemporary society to be unfair, unequal, and both subtly and overtly oppressive for

many people. We do not like it and we want to change it" ("The Value Orientation of

Critical Researchers", para. 1). As an interrogation of positivist research with its claims to

neutrality and truth, critical researchers adhere to epistemological understandings rooted

in the relationships between power, thought, and truth claims. In this view, no research is

neutral and truth claims are always influenced by aspects of power and privilege. Thus,

critical research goes beyond the interpretivist intention to understand a phenomenon and

its meaning for participants, seeking instead to reveal and disrupt the power framework

within which language and social action occur (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Merriam, 2009).

This study is equally informed by a classroom ethnographic perspective.

Classroom ethnography seeks an emic perspective to answer questions related to "who"

and "what" is "in" the classroom, what is happening, for what purpose and in what ways

within the everyday cultural life of that social space (Bloome, 2012; Santa Barbara

Classroom Discourse Group, 1992). Such work attempts to "make visible the often

invisible patterns and practices of life, to understand who has access to knowledge of

these patterns and practices, and to identify the consequences for particular members of

knowing (or not knowing) and understanding (or not understanding) these patterns"

(Dixon, Frank, & Green, 1999, p. 5). This necessarily requires attention to how meaning

and significance is inscribed in relationships, practices, classroom boundaries, material

objects, and organizational structures, as well as how those meanings and practices

evolve and are recontextualized over time and space (Bloome, 2012). Although grounded in emic perspectives, classroom ethnographies are informed by the larger social contexts in which the classroom is embedded. Thus, they take a critical perspective and gain insight from critical theory, even though they do not necessarily foreground such theories a priori as in critical ethnography.

The Research Team

Both Sioux and I are teacher consultants with Gateway Writing Project (GWP). As a local affiliate of the National Writing Project, GWP holds true to many of the beliefs and values of its parent organization, including the importance of teacher inquiry and professionalism. Sioux has been a teacher consultant with Gateway Writing Project (GWP) since 2001. Sioux's involvement with GWP brings together two things she loves to do—teach and write. As a teacher-leader, she currently serves as a co-instructor of GWP's Invitational Summer Institute and as GWP's Assistant Director of Teachers as Writers. As a writer, she contributes regularly to her blog (http://siouxspage.blogspot.com) and has had her writing published in a variety of venues. I have been involved with the GWP since 2013 and I currently serve as a co-director. This work has solidified my belief in and promotion of teachers as professionals, including the importance of teachers developing curriculum and inquiring into their own practice as a reflective and informed community of practice. The dedicated educators that make up our writing project network ignite my hope and belief that teacher-leaders are our greatest resource for educational reform (National Writing Project, 2017).

During the 2014-2015 school year, Sioux and I each became acquainted with the other's exploration of and practices associated with students writing about their

community. We co-designed two conference presentations related to this theme. In an attempt to more fully explore the benefits of having students write about their community, we agreed to form a partnership to study the effects of critical, place-conscious literacy pedagogy on students' literacy development and sense of agency in relation to the shaping of places and spaces. Yet, we each came to the work from different paths.

Sioux Roslawski. Sioux is a European American woman with 25 years' of public-school teaching experience in multiple grade levels including third, fifth, and sixth grades. For 15 of those 25 years, she taught in the school where this study took place-Gregory Elementary[1]. Prior to that, she taught in a different building in the same district. Her career began during the 1990s in a neighboring school district. Thus, she spent most of her teaching career in public schools in North St. Louis County, an area that has seen a rapid demographic shift from a primarily European American population to a majority African American population beginning in the 1990s (see chapter four for more in-depth discussion). Sioux, however, was well-aware of the shifting demographics as she has lived in communities in North St. Louis County since childhood. Sioux retired from public school teaching after the 2015-16 school year and now teaches 6th, 7th and 8th grade in a private school in the City of St. Louis.

Because of her experiences with both teaching and writing, Sioux believes in the importance of developing students' writing voices. She is no stranger to social justice education and seeks out opportunities to lead children in activities that make them feel validated and powerful. In the excerpt below, Sioux describes some of these experiences:

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[1] Pseudonym

One year my fifth graders wanted the salad bar to be reinstated. (Previously, a student had sat on it and broke it.) They created a petition, brainstormed a list of "new" food items they'd like to see as lunch offerings— then pared it down to a more realistic list, got signatures on the petition and presented their ideas to the cafeteria supervisor. Through this experience, they discovered they do have a voice and their voice can make a difference.

We've also had classroom courtrooms. The students were the judge, the lawyers, and the jury in determining whether or not the classroom guidelines should have been altered/ignored when it pertained to individual students and the earning of a classroom party/field trip. Through these experiences, they saw that the law is not black and white—there are considerations made when a ruling is made.

And this year [the 2014-15 school year]*, we've been able to weave our community's experiences into our classroom as we discussed and wrote memoirs and created digital presentations.* [Gregory Elementary] *is close to where Michael Brown was killed. Many of our students were involved directly or indirectly in the protests. The start of our 2014-2015 school year was delayed by a couple of weeks because of the unrest in Ferguson. And it continued. On the night the grand jury's decision was handed down, our school was broken into. Looters stole two carts full of iPads. Because I feel there can be healing when there is an open writing community, we did a great deal of writing about racial issues in Ferguson, in St. Louis and in the United States. Students interviewed some business owners in the community. One of the business owners—Cathy Jenkins of Cathy's Kitchen—had her restaurant threatened by a large group of looters. (Her restaurant is right next to the Ferguson Police Department.) A handful of peaceful protestors—protesters who were also loyal customers of Cathy's Kitchen—stopped the looting by linking arms and demanding they leave her restaurant alone. As they interviewed Mrs. Jenkins, the students realized that people can take a stand. They can utilize their power to make a difference. They do matter!*

Although the excerpt above does not reveal some of the tensions and hurdles that Sioux had to tackle to implement such projects, in other journal entries she wrote of running up against administrative queries and pressure. In the excerpt below, she provides additional detail about how she engaged students in writing about their experiences during the 2014-15 school year:

Last school year--the year of Michael Brown--we did some writing as a way to process what happened. We wrote so we could heal. We had counselors come in and talk to the teachers, and were told that we were not supposed to bring it up, but if students wanted to talk/write about it, we should listen.

This was like ignoring the elephant in the room. It was such a huge part of the students' lives. Their families talked about it. Some of the kids participated in

the protests. They saw it emblazoned across the television screen many times a day. To not bring it up--at least in an on-the-periphery way to let the students know it was okay to talk/write about it--was doing a disservice to the students.

My way of making my school district happy ("Don't bring it up") while also being sensitive to my students was to sandwich Michael Brown in the middle of other things. For example, I prodded them to write about what they did during the summer… what they heard… what they saw… what their family talked about. At one point during the 2014-2015 school year I spoke of having a son (who is white) and how some police might view him in a different light when pulling him over, compared to pulling over a black male teenager. They were invited to write about what is fair and what is unfair.

One day, my principal came to me and said that one of my students told him we were writing about "dead bodies." He said, "I know you do some crazy things, Mrs. R, but I don't think you're that crazy." Of course I assured him I had never used that phrase. Third graders--when given some leeway--sometimes go off on unexpected directions…

Because of his concern, I knew we'd have to tiptoe around the issues, but if the floodwalls crumbled and a flood of feelings rushed out, well… I couldn't help that, could I?

In Sioux's own words, we can see her willingness to take on important issues with students and navigate the political climate of the school. Her extensive experience working in high-need public schools, her affiliation as a teacher-leader with the Gateway Writing Project, and her personal belief in student empowerment each contributed to her desire to implement this collaborative action research and influenced the ways in which it unfolded. The words of her journal suggest that her motivation to enact this study was found in her experiences as a writer in using writing as both a healing and discovery process.

Katherine O'Daniels. Like Sioux, I am a European American woman and a life-long resident of the St. Louis metropolitan area. Unlike Sioux, prior to conducting this study during the 2015-16 school year, I had never before worked in a school comprised primarily of African American students. Because I had spent most of my life living and working in suburban, middle-class, European American contexts, I had largely insulated myself from the issues that communities of color and urban schools faced. Within my

first two semesters of my doctoral program, my beliefs about education and my

philosophy as an educator changed completely as I become a scholar of sociocultural

perspectives of literacy. The following is drawn from a journal early in my doctoral

program in which I reflected on my growing understandings of myself as a racialized

being.

> *I grew up in the same town that my father grew up in and his parents before him. The community was primarily White and middle class and the schools that I attended were over 90% White. My parents have always been committed to social justice and they taught my brothers and me that we should concern ourselves with the content of a person's character, rather than race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status or any other external factors. However, considering the fact that I was surrounded by people who had similar backgrounds, this came through strongest for me in a feminist stance. As I continued through high school and college, I learned more about the atrocities committed throughout the history of race relations in our country. Because of this, multiculturalism, diversity, and equal opportunities were values that characterized my philosophy as an educator during my teacher education courses. Despite this, I still lacked real knowledge and understanding of the African American culture, not to mention various others.*
>
> *It is with this background that I began teaching fourth grade in a community not far from where I grew up, which was also over 90% White (during my six years of teaching fourth grade, I had only two Black students). I filled my classroom with multicultural literature and had posters displayed which advocated for diversity. I took every opportunity to teach the children that prejudice and discrimination are wrong, and through literature and history I aimed to help students to understand the ways in which people had been hurt by racism. However, books were my resource. I was ignorant of the lived experiences and culture of African Americans, so I steered clear of discussing present race relations. Part of this was due to fear—fear that my ignorance would be revealed, but also fear that parents might object due to the fact that race is a controversial topic and people have differing views. As I look back I can see that I taught my majority White, middle-class students the same things that I had been taught—that we should be "colorblind" and that atrocities were committed against African Americans by those who share our skin color were part of our history, but not our present. Despite what I believed were good intentions, I did little to move them beyond the ignorance and guilt that characterized my feelings when confronting issues of race.*

During my doctoral program, I immersed myself in scholarship around critical

literacy and anti-racist pedagogy. I came to better understand the ways in which structural

racism operates in schools and society and the ways in which my whiteness implicates

me in such systemic oppression. I tried to work through feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and

inadequacy that I felt. I read books about the experiences of people of color and learned

about methods of being an anti-racist ally. In the courses I taught as a graduate teaching

assistant, I encouraged teacher candidate to disrupt deficit perspectives and work toward

an asset-based approach to teaching. Although my identity as an educator had certainly

shifting and I fully recognized the political nature of teaching that I had previously

ignored, my experiences in working with children of color was limited to professional

development work with teachers in a different Ferguson elementary school.

In August of 2014 when Michael Brown was shot I recognized the workings of

institutionalized racism in a way I would have been able to previously. Although I

privately cheered the protestors who were making their voices heard and mourned with

the mothers of color who have to teach their children about the ways of the world much

differently than me, I was uncertain of how I might show my solidarity in a more active

way. I debated with friends and neighbors in attempt to get them to understand the impact

of implicit bias and pervasive deficit thinking and to characterize racism as a structural

problem, rather than individual pathology. I continued to learn about the ways in which

legacies of racism had resulted in the current situation in the St. Louis region. Ultimately,

I saw hope in the work that was being done by activist on behalf of the community and I

recognized that this tragedy also presented opportunity to move our city forward in a

different way.

Eventually, I realized that one way I might hope to impact the future of our city

was by helping the children of Ferguson to access and engage in literacy for powerful

purposes to critique, celebrate, and re-imagine their community. Thus, I envisioned this work as politically-engaged and activist-minded teaching and research. I came to this work wanting to engage as an anti-racist ally, not a white savior. I wanted to listen to and amplify the voices of the children, not speak for them. In attempting this solidarity work, I have come up against many obstacles, not the least of which is my continued need to engage in what my whiteness means for me as a racialized being and how I can more fully confront and disrupt systems of oppression that work in schools and communities, even as I continue to be implicated in them.

Researcher roles. As the district-hired teacher responsible for instruction and assessment, Sioux had the primary responsibility for implementing the literacy pedagogy and adhering to the district's demands in regard to teaching and assessment. My official role in the school was that of classroom volunteer. I had the pleasure to co-teach literacy with Sioux two to five days a week throughout the school year. She and I began meeting to co-design the units of study beginning during the summer of 2015. Throughout the school year, we met regularly to co-plan instruction, share and analyze data, reflect, and determine next steps in our project. As co-teachers often do, we also huddled frequently throughout the day to switch gears as needed and discuss student work. Sioux maintained daily lesson plans via Google Drive, which she shared with me. She also occasionally contributed entries to a teacher-researcher journal. In addition, she collected classroom data in the form of student work and through interviews with students.

I held the role of primary researcher, taking on the responsibilities related to the institutional and ethical guidelines of conducting research, as well as collection of audio and video data during classroom literacy events and student writing. In addition, I stored

and organized all data. During our collaborative meetings and "huddles," Sioux and I

often reflected upon and analyzed classroom happenings and student writing together;

however, the in-depth analysis included in the findings chapters was conducted by me. I

have presented Sioux with copies of each findings chapter for member checking, and I

have incorporated her words, thoughts, and actions throughout this dissertation to clarify

and illuminate the findings.

Collaborative action research hinges on the ability of the primary researcher to

maintain a reflexive stance and not co-opt the project or privilege his/her knowledge over

the local knowledge (Wimpenny, 2010). Yet, the parity that is supposed to exist in

participatory research is not always easy to achieve due to power relations inherent in

university and school-based partnerships. Thus, Chu Lau & Stille (2014) call for a

pragmatic and fluid view of parity in school-based collaborative action research that

creates multiple positions of power and allows for shifting roles at different stages of the

research process. Sioux and I each came to this project by different paths, but we shared

many of the same goals. Nevertheless, I tended to emphasize a critical stance, while she

emphasized a focus on the practice of teaching writing. While we certainly had shared

power and we learned much from each other, we never fully broke out of the stances with

which we approached the work. Thus, she took on more of the practical aspects and I

took on more of the research aspects. Throughout the year we grew in our relationship as

co-teachers and co-researchers; yet, our inability to shift our roles more fluidly impacted

what we were able to accomplish, a point I return to in the conclusion.

Participants

Twenty-seven students passed through our classroom doors throughout the school year. Despite the somewhat high number of total students, the class size was never more than 22 students and was even as low as 15 students at the start of the year. In September, one of the third-grade teachers was moved to fourth grade and her students were redistributed among the remaining third grade classrooms, which resulted in seven additional students joining Sioux's class. During the remainder of the year, we had seven students who left and six students who came to the school. Of the 27 total students, 22 were African American, 3 were multi-racial, 1 was European American, and 1 was Asian-American. There were 13 girls and 14 boys. In September, 25 percent of students were reading on or above grade level based on school goals related to Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading levels. By May, 44 percent of students were reading on or above grade level based on the same measure. Only two students achieved grade-level proficiency on the "on-demand" writing assessments. Twenty of the students were included as participants in the study (See Table 1).

As with any class of students, this reporting of demographics and quantitative data can only provide the most basic profile of a group of students. A more intimate portrait of this class of students will develop in later chapters as I explore the interactions, conversations, and writing of focal participants throughout the year.

Table 1

Participants

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Levels		Star Test Results (Grade Level Equivalent)		On-Demand Writing Post-Assessment (4 – point scale)			2016 ELA MAP Level
			August M = goal	May P = goal	August	May	Narrative	Informational	Opinion	May
Ayana	F	African American	I	Q	2.0	3.2	2	2	--	Basic
Candice	F	African American	H	I	1.7	2.0	1	1.5	1	Below Basic
Celso	M	Latino & Pacific-Islander	I	O	2.2	2.8	2	1.5	2	Basic
Corey	M	African American	I	O	2.4	4.2	2	2	1.5	Basic
Desean	M	African American	J	N	2.7	3.9	2	2	1.5	Below Basic
Jalisa	F	African American	T	X	5.4	6.7	3	4	2.5	Advanced
Jasmine	F	Euro. American & African American	H	N	1.9	2.6	--	--	1.5	Basic
Lamar	M	African American	K	O	2.8	2.6	1.5	1.5	2	Basic
Maya	F	African American	P	R	4.0	4.2	1.5	2.5	--	Basic
Montez	M	African American	R	U	4.6	4.6	1.5	2	2	Proficient
Noah	M	African American	N	Q	3.7	4.3	1.5	2.5	--	Proficient
Simeon*	M	African American	--	P	--	5.2	--	--	--	Advanced
Tasha	F	African American	J	O	2.8	2.9	2.5	1.5	2.5	Basic
Zac	M	Euro. American & African American	J	P	2.5	2.8	1.5	1.5	1	Basic
Alessandra**	F	Filipino-American	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Benjamin*	M	African American	--	--	--	--	2	2	--	--
Jerome*	M	African American	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--
Lucy*	F	European American	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Quenton*	M	African American	--	--	1.3	--	2.5	--	--	--
Reggie*	M	African American	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

*Student was not there the entire year
**Student from a different third grade class; joined our community mapping project only

Data Collection

Data was collected using ethnographic methods (Bloome, 2012; Carspecken, 1996; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995/2011). Data collection began in August 2015 and lasted through May 2016. Below I outline the corpus of data, including the different sources of data and their associated purpose, as well as the general process of collecting each source of data.

Teacher-researcher field journal. Sioux and I tracked our process and our ongoing analyses and reflections through various methods. Together these comprise a field journal. I explain each method and the resulting data below.

Audio-recorded planning meetings. Each time that Sioux and I met to plan during lunch, planning period, or after school I audio-recorded our interaction as a way to create an audit trail of our decision-making processes. During these planning meetings, Sioux and I relied on observational data and student writing to evaluate our implementation of the lessons and plan next steps. This process reflected the cyclical nature of action research; it was emergent and conversation-based, matching the process that reflective practitioners use to make day-to-day and moment-to-moment decisions based on the strengths and needs of their students within the natural school context. I have over 50 hours of audio-recorded conversations between Sioux and me.

Planning artifacts. These include documents that either guided our planning or teacher-created documents that were used to scaffold instruction with students. Specifically, this includes Sioux's daily lesson plans, which she documented on Google Docs corresponding to each day of the week and shared with her administrator. To create a full picture, I compiled all the daily lesson plans, excluding Math, Science, and Social

Studies, into one document that spans 84 pages. Likewise, this portion of the teacher-researcher journal also includes detailed unit plans, lists of mentor texts, and other resources that guided our lesson planning.

Fieldnotes. During times when I took on the role of participant-observer, rather that teacher, I captured field notes of lessons. Thus, much of my writing and collecting of data via fieldnotes is from first semester when I was still becoming integrated in the social space and learning the routines and patterns of practice. Often the fieldnotes were focused on the teacher-directed portion of the lesson because I would take on a more active role in conferring and working with students during independent reading and writing times. In addition to written fieldnotes, Sioux and I captured photos of various classroom happenings and lessons, as well as classroom, school, and community spaces.

Reflective memos and journals. Unfortunately, given the demands placed on Sioux in her capacity as classroom teacher and the time we spent in planning meetings, Sioux did not write reflective memos as often as we had planned. However, I have eight entries from Sioux throughout the year. In addition, she responded to inquiries via email and has retrospectively reviewed and commented on fieldnotes, both of which work to capture her perspectives. In addition, much of our reflection was done collaboratively, during planning meetings. Thus, records of Sioux's reflections were captured via our audio-recorded planning sessions.

For my part, I often captured my reflections and thoughts about the day's happenings via audio-recorder after I left the school. During my drive home, I often spent approximately five to ten minutes documenting and commenting on salient events throughout the day and letting my reflections prompt questions or things to consider. I

captured approximately three and a half hours of researcher memos via this method. I have since transcribed the voice memos to add to the field journal.

Interviews with teachers. Early in the school year I conducted a semi-structured interview with Sioux to inquire into her teaching background and philosophy, as well as her specific thoughts on our collaborative action research study and her experiences as a European American teacher in a school with a primarily African American population. This interview lasted just over forty minutes and has been transcribed. Although I intended to conduct interviews with Sioux at the conclusion of each unit of study, this became unnecessary due to our ongoing dialogue during planning meetings.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with nine of sixteen classroom teachers in Sioux's building, including one kindergarten teacher, one first-grade teacher, both second-grade teachers, the other third-grade teacher, both fifth-grade teachers, and two sixth-grade teachers. These interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes and were designed to learn more about how the teachers viewed the teaching of reading and writing within the building, especially as it related to the use of the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study*.

Interviews with students. Sioux and I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with students throughout the school year. In late September, we conducted semi-structured focus group interviews with students during their lunch period. Each day over a period of four days, we invited groups of four to six students to join us in the classroom for lunch. During this time, we asked students to articulate their understandings of the purpose of schooling and their visions for the classroom space. During our poetry unit in October, Sioux conducted semi-structured interviews with ten participants in which she asked them to talk about their poems and their process of

composing them, as well as the ways in which they were changing as writers. These interviews were video recorded and each lasted approximately five minutes. In late December and early January, approximately half-way through the school year, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eleven participants. These interviews were designed to probe more deeply into students' experiences within their homes, schools, and communities, as well as their perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. Each interview lasted approximately 20 – 30 minutes and was both audio- and video-recorded. Finally, on the last day of school, I went around to each of thirteen participants to quickly capture their perspectives of their third-grade year. These informal interviews were quick, lasting only one to two minutes, and took place within the chaotic happenings of the end of the day. Thus, they are structured more like a "red-carpet interview" than a research interview, which both connected with our film festival the night before and fit within our time constraints.

Throughout the year during independent reading and writing time, Sioux and I conducted informal interviews as we spoke to students about their experiences with and reactions to the literacy curriculum. These conversations included student writing conferences and other conversations with the students about their writing and their learning preferences. At times, Sioux and I knew in advance with which student we each would be working, and we were purposeful in our attempts to capture these student conferences. At other times, the conferring happened "on the fly" and were captured only as a natural extension of classroom happenings. Thus, occasionally, these informal interviews were captured in whole or part on video, but more often they were audio-recorded. Much of the work of students and teachers during the last two weeks of school

revolved around the process of creating multi-modal videos, some of which was captured

via audio and video. Because there was overlap between these informal conversations

and other video- and audio-recorded literacy events, it is difficult to distinguish between

the two to determine the quantity or length of these type of interviews.

        Video- and audio- recorded literacy events. This is the method of data

collection that not only garnered the most data, but also evolved the most throughout the

year. First semester was somewhat of a learning curve as I managed the limitations of

collecting video data. To begin with, there was always the question of where to put the

video camera to best capture the classroom happenings. In addition, there was the

problem of sound. Although I could usually hear my voice and Sioux's voice quite

clearly, the students' voices were not easy to decipher. This was true during whole class

lessons, but more so during small group interactions or conversations during independent

work time.

        Because of the audio limitations, I began using three voice recorders starting in

November. One of the voice recorders usually stayed with me, either in my pocket or

clipped to my lanyard. Occasionally Sioux would keep another nearby, especially when

conferring with students. In addition, during small group work I would place the

recorders near three small groups to try to pick up their interactions. Although this

method of collecting audio data helped somewhat, it was not without its own problems.

For example, during small group work, there was often so much background noise with

all the kids working that it is not possible to hear the small group interactions. Also, when

there was not matching video, it became difficult to distinguish which students were

talking. Finally, because one of the video recorders usually stayed with me, it only picked up conversations that I was a part of or that I was close to.

My video data collection methods improved as the year progressed as well. During second semester, I began to regularly use two video-recording devices—a digital video recorder and an iPad. I had a full tripod for the iPad and a small tripod with bendable legs for the video camera. This meant I could place the video camera at various angles since I could place the small tripod on top of shelves and other places where a full tripod would not fit. I could also easily adjust the legs to focus the camera on a particular area of the room. In addition, two cameras meant two different angles of the same lesson. Finally, I also moved the cameras to different spots in the room depending on whether the lesson was whole class, small group, or independent work.

Although these multiples sources for recording classroom happenings helped to overcome some of the initial limitations, it also meant that I sometimes had up to five pieces of data for one classroom event. By second semester, it was typical for me to have at the minimum a video recorded lesson and audio back-up of the lesson, which included conferring during independent writing time. During our community mapping unit, it was typical to have two videos from different angles, plus one or two audio files for a single period of class time. After accounting for the overlapping data sets, I captured by video almost 82 hours of classroom literacy events. Unique audio files that are not just back-ups of video account for an additional 61 hours.

Collection of artifacts. Throughout the project, both Sioux and I collected student artifacts that related to the literacy work students were doing and their engagement with placemaking. This included student writing pieces, but also included

other artifacts as well, such as KWL charts or pre-writing documents. This data also

includes student-produced photos and videos of spaces and places within and around the

school and community. There are 433 unique writing pieces that student participants

created on Chromebooks and shared with Sioux and me in their Google folders

throughout the school year. In addition, there are over 300 photos and videos that

students took when we went on walking field trips, as well as additional photos and

videos that individual students took of their home spaces.

Student achievement data. To provide insight into and an overview of each

student's literacy development, Sioux kept records that included students Guided

Reading levels based on running records, STAR test data, and scores from "on-demand"

writing assessment. In addition, she shared students' MAP test scores with me.

Demographic and school data. These data included historical documents,

demographic data, school and district correspondence, census data, and other community

records that contributed to our place-making focus. Data in this category were retrieved

primarily through websites or other publicly-available sources.

Analytic Procedures

Given the time spent at the research site as well as the extremely large data set,

organizing, managing, and analyzing this data provided many challenges. I had to be

selective in choosing what data to focus on, while still ensuring that the analysis was

robust and grounded in the full corpus of data. In the sections that follow I describe how I

organized and reviewed the entire data set and the ways in which I selected data for

transcription and further analysis. I then describe my analytic frameworks and specific

procedures for analysis. Rather than a sequential unfolding, this was an on-going,

iterative process that prompted continued deeper levels of analysis over time.

Sorting and organizing data. Although students kept writer's notebooks, they primarily drafted on Chromebooks using Google classroom tools. In the beginning of the year, I walked each student though how to create a folder in Google drive and how to share it with Sioux and me. Each piece they wrote during writing was housed in that folder. After each unit of study, I logged basic descriptive data about student writing. This included coding the writing data by participant, title of piece, date created, unit of study during which the writing was created, and any collaborators with whom the document was shared. Thus, by the end of the year I had logged all the students' writing from their shared Google folders into a spreadsheet titled "Student Writing Log." This provided opportunity for the most basic of quantity counts, including how many total documents were created, how many documents each student created, and how many documents were created within each unit (total numbers and by student). (See Appendix 1 for a sample of the "Student Writing Log" spreadsheet.)

All data aside from the student writing was logged in a different spreadsheet titled "Data Index." I began logging data into this spreadsheet chronologically. For each piece of datum, I recorded the following: date; unit of study; general description of teaching and learning activities; data collection method (e.g. audio, video, fieldnotes, etc.); duration of time (if applicable); data type (e.g. interview, lesson, planning, etc.); whether or not there were other matching/overlapping data sources; and the file name. After all data was logged, I was able to sort and filter to look only at a particular unit of study or a particular set of data. Thus, I created sheets that broke the data down by unit of study and semester. I also created a sheet where I sorted the data by type and data collection

method. This allowed me to clearly discern all the interview data from the planning sessions from the lessons.

In sorting and organizing the data I had to account for the overlapping audio and video files. I conducted basic video and audio editing, including combining videos to make one longer video, combining videos by using picture in picture to show simultaneously occurring events, and segmenting video and audio data into smaller files. As I reviewed each set of audio and video during this process, I added the following categories to my "Data Index" spreadsheet: descriptions of what the audio and video had captured; researcher notes and memos; and key words/open codes. (See Appendix 2 for a sample of the "Data Index" spreadsheet.) I also compiled a chronologically ordered field journal based on my field notes, transcripts of recorded memos, and Sioux's journal responses. In addition, I compiled a lesson plan book that includes not only the daily lesson plans that Sioux generated for submission to her administrator, but also copies of unit-planning documents and teacher-generated worksheets/activities that were used during lessons. I reviewed planning meetings as needed to extend and clarify what I was learning from review of video, audio, and fieldnote data. The "Student Writing Log", "Data Index", and compiled researcher field journal together provided a broad overview of the school year and the entire data set.

In the process of sorting and reviewing the data set, reoccurring themes started to bubble up. For example, I honed in on tensions between our research agenda and the accountability demands of the school; negotiations between what I came to refer to as "teacher-directed space" and "kid-negotiated space"; the importance of pop culture; and the changing participation of focal students throughout the year. Although these emerging

themes prompted my thinking and sparked further questions, I knew I needed a more systematic way to approach my data set so that I could make informed decisions about which slices of data to more fully analyze. Therefore, I turned back to my research questions, which prompted a deeper level of analysis—spatial analysis.

  Spatial analysis of third space. To develop a process to analyze the spatial elements of the classroom, I re-examined theoretical frameworks and empirical studies focused on the concept of third space (Bhahba, 1994; Soja, 1996). Drawing on the notion of hybridity, Bhabha (1994) argues that social spaces form through the rupturing of boundaries and the flows of information, practices, and identities. Therefore, he rejects the claim that communities and identities are shaped through boundaries between "us" and "them", 'self' and 'other', instead suggesting that identities are inevitably hybridized. Thus, for Bhabha, culture is primarily spatial. The third space, then, equals the location of hybrid cultural practices. As such, third space is neither fully one culture or the other, but both and neither at the same time.

  Soja (1996) also foregrounds *and/both also* propositions, rather than simple *either/or* dichotomies, and it is this attention to "thirding as an-Other" that characterizes his conceptualization of thirdspace. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) trialectics of spatiality, Soja describes the firstspace as that which can be materially perceived in space, both the medium and outcome of human activity, produced through spatial practice. Secondspace resides in the mind as conceived space. It is the representation of space through linguistic and embodied means, entirely ideational, constituted from imagined spaces as projected into the empirical world. Thirdspace arises as a result of

the firstspace-secondspace duality. In defining its qualities, Soja (1996) describes

Thirdspace as:

> a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences,
>
> emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the
>
> generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract
>
> and the concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and lived, marked out
>
> materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial)
>
> knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power.
>
> (p. 31)

Thus, it is neither firstspace, nor secondspace, but a new space onto its own, a lived

space, a space of limitless possibility.

Rowe and Leander's (2005) analytic framework helped me to think broadly about

the space of the classroom. For each spatial perspective—perceived, conceived, and

lived—there is a different set of questions or considerations for observation. For example,

for perceived space (first space) the focus is on "the material world that is directly

sensible and open to measurement and description" (p. 320). The analytic focus,

therefore, is on objects in the built environment, bodies in space, and movement within

and across spaces. Analysis of conceived space (second space) looks to "discursively

devised representations of space and spatial representations of power" (p. 320). Thus,

attention is given to the ways in which rules and norms regulate spatial access and

arrangement. Finally, for lived space (third space) one can look for the ruptures,

deviations, and imaginative use of objects and bodies that both appropriate and change

space. Here, then, the analyst looks to "forms that draw on material and represented space

but extend beyond them" (p. 320). In applying this framework, I looked across the "Data

Index" spreadsheet, focusing on each set of questions in turn. (See Appendix 3 for an

overview of my Spatial Analysis.)

Narrowing the data set. This broad spatial analysis helped me to discern some

patterns in the ways in which the space of the classroom and school shaped the

interactions and vice-versa. For example, in looking across the themes generated from the

perceived space (first space) and conceived (second space), I noticed how the Lucy

Calkins curricular materials served to organize the classroom space via the mini-lesson at

the carpet and contributed to many unspoken practices overtime. Thus, I began attending

more closely to data that helped me make sense of how the Lucy Calkins materials were

used and taken up in the classroom. In addition, I became more aware of how integral the

Chromebooks were to the classroom space as a communicative tool that facilitated

literacy learning throughout the year. In terms of how bodies move in space, I began to

attend to how routine practices such as lining up, coming to the carpet, and taking a

restroom break were used to manage and discipline bodies. But ultimately, I became most

interested in the lived space (third space) ruptures and tensions that created the potential

for new identities, positionings, and possibilities within the classroom space. Thus, I was

drawn to the data within the poetry unit and the community mapping units, as these

represented deviations from the Lucy Calkins curriculum. In addition, I more closely

examined how students were appropriating the Chromebooks for their own purposes.

With these purposes in mind, I filtered the "Data Index" spreadsheet, focusing

only on video data of classroom literacy events. I looked for learning episodes that could

help build a record of regularly occurring routine social practices over the course of the

year, as well as those cruces, or moments of disruption from the routine. I transcribed one

mini-lesson across each unit of study to look closely at how practices were linked by

actions, objects, and language. (See Appendix 4 for a Transcription Convention Key.)

However, I also wanted to better understand the unique identities that came together in

this space and through these learning episodes. To this end, I transcribed all semi-

structured interviews with the students and the semi-structured interview with Sioux, as

these data offered rich glimpses into students' lives outside of the classroom, as well as

the thinking behind their literacy practices.

      In order to bring these varying pieces of data together, I used mediated discourse

analysis, which offered both a theoretical and methodological framework to consider the

relationship between discourse and action (Norris & Jones, 2005).

      Mediated Discourse Analysis. Mediated discourse analysis (MDA) is used to

analyze discourse *in* action with the focus on social actors as they are acting. Thus, MDA

attends to the complexity of social situations, attempting to understand how mediational

tools, such as objects and language, and the actions taken with such mediational tools

intersect in an intricate nexus of practice. This nexus includes multiple social practices, as

well as the trajectories of multiple histories and storylines that are resemiotized or

reproduced to account for social identities and social groups. Analysts applying MDA

attend to five primary concepts: mediated action, mediational means, practices, sites of

engagement, and agency.

      Mediated action. Wertsch (1994; 1998) asserts that all actions are mediated

through cultural tools, including language, objects, practices, identities, institutions, and

other semiotic systems. These cultural tools do not determine what actions can be taken;

however, they offer certain affordances and constraints that create a tension between such

mediational means within a sociocultural setting and their unique, contextualized use in

action. Thus, mediated actions represent the most basic unit of analysis for mediated

discourse analysts, allowing for a focus on both the agent and the mediational means,

each differentially influencing the action (Scollon, 2005).

Mediational means. Mediational means are the technical and psychological tools,

developed in cultural, institutional, and historical settings, that carry sociocultural

patterns and knowledge (Jones & Norris, 2005; Wertsch, 1994). Wertsch (1998) contends

that all mediational means are both material and semiotic. Jones and Norris (2005)

summarize this writing:

> Just as psychological tools are made material through texts, utterances, practices,
>
> and identities, material tools are integrated into psychological representations of
>
> social practices in the user's habitus….Understanding mediational means,
>
> therefore, requires taking both the socio-cultural histories of our habitus and the
>
> socio-cultural histories of mediational means into account. (p. 50).

Here again, attention is given to both the social actor and the cultural tools in use, as well

as the social, historical, and cultural patterns that gave rise to their use in the first place.

Practices. Practices are chains of real-time mediated actions that are understood

by other social actors to be the same action because of their repeated performance over a

period of time. Such practices help to define what social actors are doing, as well as who

they are (Jones & Norris, 2005). This is because such chains of actions have a history not

only with a particular group of people, but also within the habitus of the user. Scollon

(2001) claims the study of such practices can provide understandings of the connections

between individual's cognitive and social development and the socio-cultural environment in which they reside because both social actions and social identities are based in social practices. Therefore, an analytical focus should be on the ways in which practices are linked in real time to form a nexus of practice. It is here where understandings of values, ideology, and power in social relationships can be understood (Jones & Norris, 2005).

Sites of engagement. Sites of engagement refer to the convergence in real time and space of mediated actions, mediational means, and practices. For Jones (2005), "Sites of engagement are amalgamations of the patterns of orientation towards time and space that participants bring to these moments and locations of social action" (p. 140). Similar to critical social theorists, then, sites of engagement give attention to the ways in which time and space arise from shared practices, which are built through interactions that are mediated by both cultural tools and social identities.

Agency. Mediated discourse analysts look at the ways in which agency is distributed, enacted, represented, and contested among human actors, mediational means, and the discourses that circulate through them. Thus, they attend to the affordances and constraints on the actions one takes as a result of the interplay between the habitus of the individual social actor, the social practices which are engaged, and the unique socio-cultural settings (Jones & Norris, 2005). As with previous discussions of agency, issues of power and domination are at the fore. Analysts must understand how power impacts the ways in which actions are defined along different timescales and trajectories, as well as who is able to control the positioning of social actors, and ultimately to what extent such power is negotiated or contested.

Navigating the nexus of practice. Scollon and Scollon (2004) outline a series of tasks involved with navigating the nexus of practice that analysts can use to map mediated actions within semiotic cycles. They suggest first creating broad-stoke maps and then following some cycles through people, places, practices, objects, and discourses. Thus, to conduct nexus analysis, I looked across routine practices that spanned the year, as well as individual lessons and particular segments of interaction. The goal was to determine the ways in which mediated actions became linked together into practices, the objects and discourses that served as mediational means for those practices, and the extent to which such practices and mediational means appeared to be submerged in the habitus of individual participants. The following questions guided my analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 159 – 175).

- How did participants all come to be placed at this moment and in this way to enable or carry out this action?

- What built structures, design aspects, and discourses of this place are central or foregrounded as crucial to the action and which are backgrounded?

- What discourses are "invisible" in this action because they have become submerged in practice?

- What is the history of objects and concepts as mediational means for this action?

In addition, I attended to the ways in which mediated actions were linked in chains of actions. This involved considering anticipatory actions and future actions; key points and intervals within semiotic cycles; and timescales. Within each of these questions and considerations, I attempted to determine the extent to which actions and mediational means were being or had been transformed or resemiotized.

In going through this process, I not only discovered links among semiotic cycles, I also focused on the ways in which discourse is present throughout. Thus, I conducted critical discourse analysis (CDA) as part of and alongside the nexus analysis.

Critical discourse analysis. Gee (2011) writes that "we use language to build things in the world and to engage in world building" (p. 16) and maintains that meaning making takes place as we use language in social situations to be certain types of people and accomplish certain activities. A central premise of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the idea that through examinations of discursive practices, researchers can describe, interpret and explain how discourse both reflects and shapes relations of power and ideology (Fairclough, 1992; Rogers, 2011).

When conducting discourse analysis, the researcher attends to the functions of discourse and the interrelationship among three orders of discourse—genre, discourse, and style—that control linguistic variability by allowing for certain language possibilities within a particular social situation, while excluding others (Fairclough 2011; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014). Genre refers to "ways of interacting," and is concerned with the ways in which the text is structured through parallel structures, cohesion, and the ways in which one text draws from other voices, texts and genres (intertextuality). The purpose is to determine how discourse is organized into recognizable patterns and social practices. "Ways of representing," or discourse, assumes that particular perspectives that are used to enact ideas about the world and these can be studied in text. In other words, what figured worlds and cultural models are evidenced through the information focus, choice of words, verbal processes and pronouns, and purposeful silences used by the participants? Style, or "ways of being," looks at aspects of text such as transitivity, tense, modality,

nominalization, mood and appraisal. These linguistic features indicate particular identities and experiences of reality through the representation of agency, affinity, obligation, stance, attitudes and values. When connections among these three orders of discourse are brought together with various theoretical frameworks of social practice, it is possible to describe the form and function of the text, as well as interpret and explain the text in terms of discursive and social practices.

I used a hybrid approach to critically analyze discourse. My analyses shifted between a micro-analytic approach that attended closely to interactional, prosodic, and grammatical features and a broader examination of the ways in which language and other mediational means were being used to enact or represent figured worlds and Discourses. For example, for some of the data, such as interview transcripts, I relied most heavily on linguistic and thematic analyses. This is because the situated meaning of the interview process led to a fairly predictable interaction of turn-taking and conversation was the primary mode of communication. Other data, however, such as classroom events, were rich with multiple modes of meaning-making. In some cases, the verbal and written discourse needed to be analyzed in conjunction with actions, gestures, and movements, whereas with other data, there either is no verbal interaction, or it cannot be deciphered, so language becomes backgrounded and other modes are the focus of the analysis.

Analyzing student writing. Rather than analyzing every piece of writing that the students produced, I honed in on writing pieces that were created during two units of study– poetry and community mapping. The writing produced during these units was more plentiful and varied. Moreover, the pieces within these two units were prompted by culturally-relevant, teacher-designed lessons rather than the lessons that came from the

commercially-produced Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Writing that was the official curricular framework for the district. Thus, they offered richer sources of data for considering how students storied place.

For each participant, I created a single document where I copied and pasted each piece of writing, along with the title and date of production. For pieces that were either entirely or partially visual, I captured screen shots and verbally described the visual elements. For example, each student had a folder called "home photos" which housed all the photos and videos they captured when they borrowed a classroom video-recorder to take home. I took a screen shot so that a thumbnail of each photo/video would be shown and then I categorized and described the photos they took (e.g. inside spaces, outside spaces, activities, people, etc.). While compiling each student's writing, I took note of the ways in which students were representing themselves and their homes/communities and I highlighted excerpts based on the extent to which the writing contributed to students' placemaking. I then pulled each highlighted excerpt into a spreadsheet coded by participant and primary topics addressed in the excerpt. From there I conducted a cross-participant analysis in which I examined all of the topic codes in order to further categorize and further make sense of the emerging themes. From that analysis, I created the following primary codes: family (immediate and extended); Ferguson; home spaces; imagined futures; living arrangements; neighborhood; out of school activities; pop culture; race/racism; and school. I was then able to filter the spreadsheet according to each primary code to review all the excerpts within each category to further determine sub-codes.

Through examination of writing across these two units as well as observations garnered through other data that I was reviewing, I selected two focal participants whose writing I analyzed more thoroughly—Ayana and Celso. I chose these two students for a number of reasons. First, both students had a poetic quality to their writing, which could be traced by to and through the poetry unit. In addition, both students scored in the "basic" range on the end-of-year MAP test; however, I believe the writing they produced throughout the year far exceeds what they were able to demonstrate on the MAP test. However, each of these students approached the task of writing about home and community quite differently. Celso had only moved to Ferguson at the beginning of third grade, so he had not been a Ferguson resident during the greatest moments of chaos in the community. Ayana, on the other hand, lived close enough to the sites of the unrest that she had specific memories of the time period. Despite their varied perspectives, each found a way to story their homes and community in a way that worked for them.

For each of these two focal students, I reread each piece they created and I recorded additional information in the "Student Writing Log" spreadsheet. This included some additional descriptors such as mode of writing, genre, topics addressed, and word count. I also examined the revision history to see how many changes they had made over what period of time. I qualitatively analyzed the revisions, adding notes to the spreadsheet, and I also recorded other observations and questions that came up while I was reading. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of my analysis for Ayana.) I then chose specific writing pieces that I analyzed using critical discourse analysis. I relied primarily on analysis of word choice and cohesive devises used by students, paying close attention to intertextual references, as well as the silences, or what remained unwritten by students.

I also analyzed the videos that students created for a film festival at the end of the year. Although I attended to the ways in which images, music, and voice-overs extend and/or elaborate upon written text, I did not do a full multimodal analysis. This is partly because the process of creating the videos privileged the written text as the starting point and partly because the software that was used to create the videos (WeVideo) greatly limited the choices that students had available to them.

An Overview of the Findings

In developing the findings, I focused on trying to attend to various angles and slices of time to provide not only a big-picture overview, but also a detailed analysis. There are three findings chapters.

In chapter four, I attend to the space of school and the classroom as I illustrate the ways in which discourses of accountability permeated the school culture. This chapter is crafted from the perspective of the ethnographic eye. It is saturated in thick descriptions and analyses of classroom literacy events and school practices in which I was a participant-observer, rather than a co-teacher. Even though I was an insider to the classroom, I remained an outsider to the culture of the school, despite having spent three to five days a week visiting Sioux's classroom. Thus, I take on an etic perspective for the most part and rely on Sioux's researcher journals to provide emic understandings. In some ways, this serves to distance me from the racialized discourses which I endeavor to describe, yet I do not do so to shield myself from the responsibility of disrupting such discourses, a point I turn to in the discussion.

In chapter five, I turn my focus to the space of the classroom and the transformative potential that emerged within this space. Within the four walls of the

classroom, I identified as and was recognized as a co-teacher. Thus, I was a full insider and draw on an emic perspective. The data I present includes conversations between me and Sioux and insights into our practices, as well as literate practices engaged in by students. The analytic focus is on actions taken by students and teachers and how they served to (re)shape identities and transform the classroom space. To end this chapter, I provide a case study of one focal student, Celso, and the ways in which classroom literacy practices opened up space for him to explore intersections of identity and home spaces.

Chapter six looks broadly at the larger community of Ferguson and the ways in which students engaged in placemaking their community. To situate this chapter, I begin with an overview of the history and politics that have shaped the places of St. Louis and Ferguson. I then describe the fourth quarter community mapping unit that students engaged in and the ways in which Sioux and I helped students to both critically interrogate and celebrate places and spaces in their lives. Finally, I look to the voices of the students themselves to examine the ways in which they storied their homes, neighborhoods, and Ferguson. Thus, this chapter has a descriptive focus in attempt to amplify the voices of the children. I again end this chapter with a case study of a focal student, Ayana.

Chapter Four – School Spaces and Discourses of Accountability

Sioux and I envisioned narrative writing as a way for students to tell their stories of being members of the Ferguson community, and we discussed plans to conduct an oral history project involving students' families. We dreamed of having students create authentic informational texts to teach curious outsiders about Ferguson. We even thought that student groups might submit their writing to the Scholastic Kids Are Authors competition. We imagined all the things that students would have to say when we asked them to both problem-pose and celebrate their community through opinion writing. Throughout all this writing, we intended to read and deconstruct relevant texts and help students become more informed about community issues.

We quickly realized that the lived reality within the classroom and our ability to implement critical pedagogy was greatly impacted by a stifling culture of accountability. In this particular school context, discourses of accountability positioned students as successful literacy learners based solely on standardized test scores and teachers as mere technicians of pre-defined curriculum. Although this was not entirely unexpected by Sioux, there seemed to be a drastic shift in the school culture during the 2015 – 2016 school year. In the following section I provide a thick description of Gregory Elementary School (pseudonym) to illustrate this culture of accountability and the space of the school.

Gregory Elementary School

Gregory Elementary is a neighborhood school that serves approximately 400 students spread over grades PK-6. During the 2015-16 school year, the school had a majority African American student body (approx. 93 percent) and over 85 percent of the

students qualified for free and reduced price lunch. The district was provisionally

accredited, and Gregory Elementary was one of the lower performing schools according

to the previous year's state testing report.

During the 2014-15 school year, the district administration purchased *Units of*

Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing: A Common Core

Workshop Curriculum (Calkins, 2013), a commercial curriculum program for teaching

writing, for all district elementary schools. For the 2015-16 school year, full

implementation of the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* was expected, and third grade

teachers were volunteered to pilot *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* as well. These

decisions were made at an administrative level with limited teacher input and minimal

training around the materials.

Although many teachers in Sioux's building expressed that they were

overwhelmed by the complexity of the materials and the length of the lessons, some were

pleased to have the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*. They felt it was preferable to

having no specific writing resources or materials as in the past (teacher interviews). For

Sioux, however, the materials were stifling. As a published author and a teacher

consultant with the Gateway Writing Project, she had been teaching students to write well

for many years. She had a wealth of professional knowledge and experience as a teacher

of writing. Sioux recalled a message given to her during one of the first staff meetings of

the school year. The principal had forewarned her that she was going to be used as an

example, but according to Sioux, "it still stung" when, during the meeting in front of her

colleagues, the principal said (as relayed by Sioux), "Mrs. Roslawski, I understand that

you know a lot about writing instruction. But I need you do it the Lucy Calkins way. I

need everyone to use the Lucy Calkins books" (excerpt from journal reflection). Rather than acknowledging her as a professional resource for other teachers, the principal reduced her to a technician, admonished to follow the script just like everyone else.

In addition to the mandated units of study, there were multiple mandated assessments and weekly grade-level data team meetings with the principal. For writing, the teachers were expected to give three "on-demand" writing assessments during the first week of school—one assessment for narrative, one for informational, and one for opinion writing. For each mode of writing, the students were given a general prompt and had 45 minutes to write to it. Student writing was scored by each teacher on his or her own using the genre-specific, standardized "learning progression" included with the Lucy Calkins' curriculum materials, and the scores were reported at the district level. After each unit of study, students took an "on-demand" post-test, which followed the same procedure for administration, scoring, and reporting.

For reading, students took the Star Test, a standardized, computer-adaptive reading test, almost monthly which resulted in a grade equivalent, a percentile rank, and a normal curve equivalent. (They gave a version of this test for math as well.) Based on the Star Test results, Sioux was expected to conduct and report monthly running records with any student who was below grade level and quarterly running records for any student who was at or above grade level. In addition, because third grade was piloting the Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study for Teaching Reading*, they had to administer pre- and post-assessments for each unit of study, similar to the process for the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*.

The importance of testing and test results was emphasized time and again in the school. For example, class results of the Star Test, which indicated the number of students above, below, and at grade level, were expected to be displayed outside each teacher's classroom. Each class had a class goal, and students were asked to set personal goals based on their test results. In addition, in the main hallway across from the principal's office was a display with the following headings: reading at grade level; reading above grade level; one years' growth in reading; two years' growth in reading. Under the first two headings were photos of students, added during the first quarter of the school year; however, this did not get updated as the year progressed. It merely stayed as a visual reminder of a school priority.

In November, Sioux invited a local celebrity rapper with a previous connection to the school to visit the third-grade students and teachers and partake in their Thanksgiving feast. During the feast, the principal made an appearance and announced to the invited guest and all present that the students had made some progress with reading, with many on track to make a year's worth of growth. However, any celebration of that progress was quickly squashed with the admonition that these students needed to make two years' worth of growth because there was such a great need at the school and that they would be "cracking down" after the Thanksgiving break. Later, in March, two big boxes of test-prep workbooks—one for math and one for reading—appeared in Sioux's classroom. She was expected to spend 45 instructional minutes for each subject instructing students using the test prep workbooks.

As a veteran teacher, Sioux was well-aware of the non-stop demands placed on teachers; however, the 2015 – 16 school year seemed to represent a drastic increase in the

pressures she felt to improve test scores. The following interaction is excerpted from an

interview conducted with Sioux at the beginning of the year:

> **KO**: So you've been in [this district] for how many years?
>
> **SR**: Like 15 I think.
>
> **KO**: So things here are pretty good?
>
> **SR**: Yeah. It's not as bottom up as I would like, but I don't know if any school district is bottom up these days, with all the pressure that is put on us.
>
> **KO**: So tell me about [Gregory Elementary]. Tell me about what it's like being a teacher there.
>
> **SR**: This year and last year, [Gregory Elementary] is a great place. We have a supportive principal who's willing to put in as much work as, you know, being a principal is a hard job, it takes a lot of time and he's willing to put in the work and he has the commitment. He really cares about his staff and the kids, so that makes a big difference. It's a very working class neighborhood that we pull our kids from, and we have a lot of parents who haven't had a very good experience with schools, so you have to win them over. You have to win over the parents so that you can say, hey we're all in this together. But I think the parents want their kids to do well, and I have had, I've had substitutes come in and say oh, I don't want to sub at [Gregory Elementary], and they come to [Gregory Elementary] and they're like this is a nice school. You know, there's a lot of, you know, we're on the poor side of the tracks as far as the school district, but I wouldn't, I don't think I'd teach anywhere else, I love [Gregory Elementary].

In this interview conducted in early September 2015, Sioux is realistic about some of the

challenges of being a teacher at the school; however, she describes a supportive principal

and asserts that she wouldn't teach anywhere else. Sadly, it was little more than six

weeks later when Sioux first began talking about retiring from public school teaching

after that school year (fieldnotes 10/26/15). The following is an excerpt from a journal

reflection that Sioux wrote after the school year was over. In it, she describes how the

culture unexpectedly changed:

> *Surprisingly, my worst year at work began on a fairly positive note. My boss told us in staff meetings, "We can make the gains we need to make… we just have to work hard." I understood that. Our school was one of the lowest in the district—performance-wise—and everyone agreed we needed to put forth more effort than teachers in some of the other schools. I was in complete agreement. Much of the joy I gained from teaching my third graders was seeing them blossom*

into more capable and confident thinkers, readers and writers… so I was more than willing to work hard.

Soon, however, the morale of the whole school plummeted. Weekly data meetings, where the teachers gathered to discuss the students' academic struggles, became bullying sessions. Each week our principal would go on a sixty-minute rant. Barely taking a time for a breath, he'd lecture nonstop, expecting us to hammer their reading scores into our kids' heads. They were making gains, but not enough to suit him, and we needed to let the students know that they weren't progressing quickly enough. Some teachers silently cried during data meetings, but my boss was unmoved.

In this excerpt, Sioux describes routine social practices that are common to Gregory Elementary—staff meetings and weekly data team meetings with teachers and the administrator. Rather than the supportive principal she describes during the interview in September, she now refers to her "boss" as a bully who is unmoved by the crying of the teachers. However, what is especially noteworthy in the excerpt is the ways in which students are rendered by the adults. For example, Sioux describes third-graders as "readers, writers, and thinkers." She renders them as agentic beings who participate in complex, high level literacy practices. Moreover, she uses the word "blossom" to signal a growth stance and describes a process of students becoming "confident and capable." Thus, she recognizes the ways in which the students develop through the use of mediational means associated with the social practices of reading, writing, and thinking.

In contrast, when Sioux relays the discourse of staff and data meetings, students are rendered in terms of "academic struggles," "reading scores," and in need of "gains." On the one hand, the suggestion that students "weren't progressing quickly enough," also indicates a growth stance; however, the implied social practice is that of test taking, rather than reading, writing, and thinking. Thus, the mediational means become the various testing instruments that are developed, circulated, and/or scored in corporate spaces outside of the school (e.g. the Star Test, the Missouri Assessment Program, the on-

demand writing assessment in the Calkins' *Units of Study in Reading and Writing*). As a result, the students become resemiotized as test scores through the circulation of the anticipatory discourse of test taking (and scoring) that becomes progressively internalized as practice.

Despite the fact that Sioux renders students as agentic beings who engage in complex literacy practices, we can see how she also appropriates the discourse of students as test takers when she describes the mediated actions of the teachers. She positions herself and her colleagues as needing "to put forth more effort," and being "willing to work hard," in order to "make the gains we need to make" and improve their standing as one of the lowest performing schools in the district. Thus, she accepts the assumed premise that the testing instruments are valid indicators of not only student achievement, but also apt descriptors of the student body.

In the next section, I describe the ways in which Sioux and I enacted the Lucy Calkin's *Units of Study for Teaching Writing,* drawing attention to the ways in which discourses of accountability impacted our decision making. Along the way, I illustrate how the materials served as a mediational means to regulate teachers' behaviors and provide methods of surveillance by district administrators.

The Calkins' *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*

The *Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing: A Common Core Workshop Curriculum* (Calkins, 2013) is a commercial curriculum program for teaching writing that is designed by Lucy Calkins and colleagues at the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project in New York City and distributed by Heinemann. There is a separate set of materials for each grade level that consists of four

core units of study to address narrative, informational, and argument writing, as well as three additional teacher resource books. The third-grade set includes the following core units: *Crafting True Stories* (narrative); *The Art of Information Writing* (informational); *Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials* (opinion); and *Once Upon a Time: Adapting and Writing Fairy Tales* (narrative). Each unit contains approximately 20 lessons and averages about 175 pages, with many lessons spanning ten pages of text. The third-grade set also includes an *If-Then Curriculum* book (113 pages) that includes possibilities for alternate units for remediation or enrichment and a digital resource CD-ROM. Common to all sets in grades 3 – 5 is a 94-page book called, *A Guide to The Common Core Writing Workshop* and a 251-page book called, *Writing Pathways, Grades K-5: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*. In total, the materials in the third-grade set add up to over 1,100 pages of text.

The administrative expectation was that the Calkins' *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* would be closely followed. The narrative unit was to be taught and tested first quarter, with scores reported to both school and district administrators. The same process was used for the informational unit during second quarter and the opinion unit during third quarter. The district did not require writing data from an on-demand writing assessment to be collected during fourth quarter. Thus, Sioux and I gained some freedom to innovate, which resulted in our community mapping unit. See Table 2 for an overview of the units of study and the dates they were taught, as well as our attempt to focus the curriculum on placemaking even as we followed the Calkins' *Units of Study*.

Table 2

Writing Curriculum: A Year at a Glance

Dates	Unit of Study	Placemaking Focus
Aug. 17 – Oct. 7	Narrative – *Crafting True Stories* (Calkins)	Building classroom community
Oct. 8 – Nov. 6	Poetry—*Writing, Thinking & Seeing More* (Calkins and teacher designed)	Imitation Poems (Where I'm From) Poetry in nature
Nov. 9 – Dec. 18	Informational—*The Art of Informational Writing* (Calkins)	Creating a school handbook Researching famous "placemaker" activists from around the world
Jan. 4 – Mar. 4	Opinion—*Changing the World* (Calkins)	Recognizing special people in our lives Writing about school or community problems and solutions
Mar. 7 – May 24	Multimodal—Community Mapping (teacher designed)	Writing about home and community from a variety of angles What do we honor and celebrate in our community? What do we interrogate and critique in our community?

Each Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study for Teaching Writing* is divided into four "bends." Within each "bend" there are typically four to six "sessions." Each session provides detailed instructions for the minilesson, conferring and small-group work, mid-workshop teaching, and sharing. Even as experienced teachers of writing, Sioux and I found the materials to be overwhelming and spent much time starting in the summer and during the first several weeks of school trying to deconstruct the narrative unit of study. Based on our analysis, we chose bits and pieces of the sessions to incorporate into our teaching with the intent to stay true to the overall goal of the unit—to have students draft detailed, "small moments" stories that unfold "bit by bit." However, we supplemented

with additional resources and made other professional decisions while teaching this unit. For example, we spent much more time at the beginning of the unit developing students' writing stamina and helping them find ideas for writing. We also brought in approximately 15 "small moments" mentor texts to share with students (however, we could not share these texts with students during reading minilessons because we had to use the text that was included in the Calkins' *Unit of Study for Teaching Reading*). We spent eight and a half weeks on the narrative unit of study, trying to build a strong foundation for students and account for the background knowledge that they didn't have, but was expected of them within the unit of study. Ultimately, though, at the end of the first quarter, Sioux had to have the end-of-unit on-demand assessment administered, scored, and reported to administration, so we wrapped up our unit.

Our next unit was a poetry unit drawn from the *If…Then…Curriculum* book included in the curriculum materials. We spent four weeks engaged in reading, writing, listening to, viewing, and performing poetry. (More details about the literacy practices in which the students engaged, as well as our decision making with this unit will be described in chapter 5.) Despite the fact that our students were having success finding their voices as writers and we were following the Calkins' curriculum, this unit drew scrutiny from the administration. Poetry wasn't a tested mode of writing, so the principal did not understand why we had chosen this unit.

This scrutiny and pressure to adhere closely to the curriculum continued as we embarked on information writing. Like the narrative unit, this 181-page unit made assumptions about the level of background knowledge that students should possess. For example, in the unit introduction, Calkins (2013) writes, "Presumably your students will

have done some writing and a lot of reading in information texts outside of writing

workshop, in the content areas" (p. viii). In the introduction to session 2, she writes, "This

unit assumes that children entering third grade have already been taught to focus on a

topic and to make sure that the information they include in their writing pertains to that

focal subject" (p. 12). We knew from our experiences during the narrative writing unit

and our knowledge of students as readers that these assumptions were a stretch for our

students, so we spent some time upfront explicitly teaching different text structures and

the transitions that signal them. We then decided to work toward a shared writing piece

for which we knew all students would have expertise – their school. Our plan was to

create an authentic product—a school handbook—that could be given to students who

started at Gregory Elementary mid-year to help them get accustomed to their new school.

After working as a whole class to create categories of information and craft those into a

table of contents, students were to work in small groups/pairs to co-write one section to

contribute to the final product; however, we were not able to take this piece past the

shared table of contents. Although we knew that this would provide some much-needed

guided instruction for students that would transfer to them creating their own

informational pieces, questions were raised by the administration. There was an

expectation that we would finish the information writing unit and administer the end-of-

unit on-demand assessment prior to Winter Break. Thus, we made the decision to

abandon this piece and move into having students create their own, research-based,

informational pieces.

     In attempt to continue our focus on placemaking, we opted to have students read

and write about various activists from around the world through different periods in

history. Students chose who they wanted to research from the following list: Rosa Parks,

Malcolm X, Gandhi, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Nelson Mandela, Jackie

Robinson, Cesar Chavez, Ruby Bridges, and Malala Yousafzai. Based on their choices,

we formed research groups and provided books from the public library for each group,

giving careful consideration to the guided reading level of each book and the supports

that would be needed for students to comprehend the material. Small groups worked

together to take notes on their famous activist, and as a class we created a shared table of

contents to help students organize their thinking. Then each student wrote an

informational piece about their person. Throughout this unit, we positioned these activists

as "placemakers" and tried to draw students' attention to the role of each individual in

shaping their community and beyond. Although not all students had a polished piece by

the end of the semester, they did gain experience working in this genre.

By the end of the first semester, it had become very clear that our attempts to use

professional judgement were not well-received by the administration. Thus, for third

quarter, we decided that we would do something we had not yet tried—we would follow

the Calkins' *Unit of Study for Opinion Writing* as written. The title of the unit was

Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials. We saw the natural

fit with our placemaking emphasis, and we hoped that students' experience with

structuring informational text and researching activists would be enough to support them

with another challenging unit. We spent the third quarter diligently following the path

laid out in the opinion writing unit. Despite our adherence to the unit we were only able

to make it through two of the four "bends" in the unit. During this unit, students wrote

mini-essays about things they would like to have for their school and people in their lives

who should be celebrated. By the end of the quarter, each student had a longer essay focused on a community-based problem, which included such things as gas prices, littering, lying, smoking, and guns. Yet, the writing seemed uninspired. Most students completed the tasks as assigned, but the pieces lacked the passion one might expect from a person who is writing with a real purpose and audience in mind. Moreover, even our adherence to the unit drew mixed messages from the administration. Sioux was observed by her administrator in January. During her meeting to discuss the observation she was told by the administrator:

> You sounded kind of stiff when you were sticking to the book. But when you went away from the book and did your own thing--it was a great lesson. I don't want you to feel like you should read the Calkins book word for word. I want you to feel comfortable to use it as a guide. You know what your kids need, and you know a lot about teaching writing. Use the Calkins books as a base, but don't feel like you have to have to do and say every step that Lucy Calkins is telling you to do and say. Figure out what she (Calkins) wants the kids to learn--what the objective is--and teach it. (excerpt from a journal reflection by Sioux)

The frustration that Sioux felt after this was palpable. We had been using the Calkins' materials as a guide all year and drawing questions and criticism for it. Now, when she was finally following the guide as written, the administrator didn't like the result.

By the beginning of fourth quarter the school was fully in "test-prep" mode. The teachers were told they did not have to teach writing during fourth quarter because they had "covered" all the modes of writing that might be tested. In addition, they were spending 90 minutes a day teaching from test prep workbooks for reading and math. This

created space for Sioux and me to engage the students more fully in a unit of study

focused on Ferguson, our community mapping unit. (This unit will be explored in depth

in chapter six.)

In the next section, I explore the ways in which routine practices in the classroom,

mediated by both the Lucy Calkins' materials and school systems of reward and

punishment, created a classroom space of regulation and surveillance.

Routine Practices of Regulation and Surveillance

In describing how the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study* corresponded to the quarters of

the school year I examined one of the timescales that was mediated by the materials—

that of the full school year. The process for quarterly on-demand testing and reporting of

data regulated the teachers' implementation of the materials. Methods of surveillance

were also alluded to when describing the ways in which the administrator questioned

Sioux's decision making and the feedback she received after an administrative

observation.

These methods of regulation and surveillance resemiotized the Lucy Calkins

Units of Study into a mediational means for circulating discourses of accountability;

however, the materials also extended the practices of regulation and surveillance into the

daily classroom practices. Lucy Calkins and other literacy educators who promote

workshop approaches outline the cycle of a class session in terms of the following chunks

of time: 15 - 20 minutes for a mini-lesson; 30 – 40 minutes of independent writing paired

with conferencing and small-group work; and 5 – 10 minutes of sharing. Within the

Calkins' *Units of Study*, the mini-lesson was further broken down to include the

following activities: connection with prior learning or knowledge; naming of "the

teaching point"; a teacher demonstration of some sort; an opportunity for active

engagement on the part of the students; and a specific link to their literacy task for the

day. Thus, within many workshop classrooms, particularly those that use the Calkins'

Units of Study, one finds a similar pattern of activities. In addition, it is not unusual for

teachers to set up daily schedules for their students to follow that are generally the same

from day to day. However, in Sioux's school, methods for managing time and the range

of acceptable activities within such time were mandated and micro-managed by

administrators.

In a planning meeting shortly after second semester began, Sioux shared with me

the regular weekly staff newsletter ("The Gregory Way") that the principal circulated via

email. As Sioux returned from her winter breaks, refreshed and ready to tackle the day-

to-day challenges of teaching, the principal welcomed her and her colleagues back with

this: "As we begin 2016, we need to understand the sense of urgency and state of

emergency that we face daily at [Gregory]." After reiterating the need to make growth in

student performance and highlighting six teachers whose students had shown sufficient

growth on the STAR test, he then used the newsletter to revisit some expectations for

teachers. These included such things as having a specific daily routine and class schedule

with specific times that is posted in the classroom. Within this daily schedule, "There

should be <u>absolutely</u> NO down time throughout the learning day." Even as students ate

breakfast in the classroom upon arrival in the morning, they were to have a "working

breakfast" with "voice level 0" (i.e. no talking). "Class meetings" were mandated from

8:50 – 9:00 or at the end of the school day at 3:15. The instructional day was to begin at

9:00 sharp and transitions between subjects and activities were to take place within one

minute or less.

The common reasoning for having daily schedules is to provide a predictable structure for students. The tight schedule mandated by Sioux's administrator, however, further limited teacher autonomy and made it easier for teachers to be surveilled by district and school administrators. One way this was accomplished was through the "mini-lesson." Sioux reported at the beginning of the year that a school goal was to work on mini-lessons. Thus, she was expected to have a mini-lesson every day for reading and one for writing, regardless of the classroom and curriculum circumstances. She was also required to have daily learning targets for each subject listed on the whiteboard or otherwise prominently displayed in the classroom. This made is very easy for an "outsider" to enter the classroom at a given time (e.g. the beginning of a reading session) based on the posted schedule, anticipate the content of a lesson via the posted learning target, and monitor the structure of the mini-lesson (i.e. the teaching point, active engagement, link, etc.). And, it was not uncommon for there to be scheduled observations and, sometimes, unscheduled "pop-ins." For example, according to "The Gregory Way" administrator newsletter from the week of January 11 – 15, the building leadership team would be doing "walkthrough observations" on January 14; grade level teams were to do "walkthrough observations" during the weeks of January 18 and January 25; and administrators, teachers, and curriculum coordinators from outside the building would do "guided walkthrough visits" on February 4 during mini-lessons.

Breaking down the mini-lesson. These practices of regulation and surveillance translated directly into the day-to-day practices of the classroom. Because Sioux was beholden to a specific time schedule and because there was always the possibility that someone could "pop-in" during her mini-lesson, she took great care in disciplining bodies

during mini-lessons. For example, each child was expected to come to the carpet area for the mini-lesson, and Sioux carefully monitored those who were not transitioning quickly, often by hurrying them along or asking "Will you please join us?" At the carpet, students sat in assigned places and had assigned partners with whom they would talk during the "active engagement" part of the mini-lesson. In addition, they were also instructed to sit up straight with their legs crossed in front of them.

During mini-lessons was usually the only time that Sioux could be found sitting throughout the day. She sat at a desk chair in the front of the room, near a whiteboard easel and her computer desk. This position not only gave her access to the tools she might need for the demonstration portion of the lesson, it also offered a bird's-eye view of the students seated at the carpet. Through her positioning and her proximity to students, she was able to quickly surveil the students and monitor their behavior. It was not unusual for her to stop mid-sentence to correct behavior, often preceded by a term of endearment ("Sweetie, if you're going to sit there you have to be quiet."). At other times, she might pause and turn her gaze to a student who was misbehaving, waiting until they noticed the silence and her stare to stop what they were doing. Students who continued to misbehave frequently were sent away from the carpet and back to their desks or tables. Through two excerpts of classroom literacy events, I show how chains of mediated actions set up predictable practices associated with mini-lessons.

Excerpt #1. The following is a portion of a transcript from first quarter. In this mini-lesson, Sioux taught students about a technique authors use that is called "explode a moment" (Lane, 2003). This is when one stretches out a pivotal moment in a story to

build suspense. Sioux builds background knowledge by comparing this technique with

slow-motion used in film. (See Appendix 4 for transcript conventions.)

1. **SR:** So how many of you have seen a movie or watched something on TV that is in slow motion?
2. ((Noah's hand goes up while she is still talking. After she finishes question, almost all other hands go up.))
3. **SR:** Noah, when you see something in slow motion, what does that mean? What do you see?
4. ((Most hands go down during SR's turn. Quenton's hand remains in the air.))
5. **Noah:** Action.
6. ((Quenton begins waving his hand in the air during Noah's turn. Jalisa's hand goes up.))
7. **SR:** Okay. You see action. Quenton?
8. **Quenton:** (inadible)
9. ((Jalisa's hand remains up during Quenton's turn))
10. **SR:** Oka::y, ((points to Jalisa, but continues her turn)) Maybe if it's like the winning homerun that wins the game, that's going to [be in slow]
11. **Student A:**   [(inaudible)]
12. **SR:** ((points to the student A)) Exactly.
13. **SR:** ((points to Jalisa again, whose hand has been in the air since Noah's turn)) Jalisa?
14. **Jalisa:** When something cool is happening.
15. **SR:** When something really cool is happening. ((nods head as talking))
16. ((Montez's hand goes up at the end of SR's turn. Maya's hand goes up almost immediately after Montez raises his))
17. **SR:** ((points to Montez)) Yes? Montez?
18. **Montez:** (inaudible)
19. ((Maya's hand remains in the air during Montez's turn.))
20. **SR:** Okay. Sometimes in commercials. Yeah. ((points to Maya while talking, but continues her turn. Maya lowers her hand.)) I've seen a couple commercials like that too. ((looking at Maya)) Is that what you were going to say?
21. **Maya:** ((nods no)) Hmm nn.
22. **SR:** What were you going to say?
23. **Maya:** (inaudible)
24. ((Student B raises hand during Maya's turn))
25. **SR:** Right. Like maybe if they're playing ball or something, is that what you're talking about?
26. **Maya:** ((Nods head yes))
27. **SR:** Slow motion might have the character have ball coming right up to their face ((motioning with her hand moving toward her face slowly)).
28. ((Student B has her hand in the air throughout SR's turn))
29. **SR:** So today we're going to watch a video that has something in slow motion.
30. ((Student B lowers her hand at the beginning of SR's turn))

During this one-minute portion of the mini-lesson, the mediated actions of questioning, answering, raising hands, and evaluating create the practice of "connecting with background knowledge." When examining each of these mediated actions in concert with each other, one can see how the actions become linked together. For example, Sioux initiates the interaction with a question (line 1). Before she is even finished asking it, Noah has recognized it as a question and raises his hand to indicate his desire to respond. Most others follow suit shortly thereafter. When Sioux calls on Noah, most students lower their hands, except for Quenton, who begins waving his hand as Noah answers. Sioux revoices Noah's answer with a falling pitch, and then immediately calls on Quenton to respond (line 7). The interaction continues in this manner with Sioux calling on a student whose hand is raised, that student taking a turn, Sioux providing a response, and then calling on another student.

What is interesting here is not so much the Initiate-Response-Evaluation pattern as it is the way in which the social actors readily pick up on the rhythm of these actions and adjust their behavior accordingly. For example, students often kept their hands raised during another student's answer or they raised their hands during the student's answer (lines 6, 9, 16, 19, 24). Sioux recognized this as an indication that they would like a turn and responded in kind by either calling their name and/or pointing to them thereby giving them permission to respond. Thus, in this excerpt, the action of raising a hand along with a verbal and/or non-verbal action from Sioux anticipates the action of student speaking.

The prosody in Sioux's responses also provide cues to the students. In lines 7, 10, 12, 15, 20, and 25, Sioux evaluates student responses. Her acceptance or rejection of their answer can be determined not only by what she says but how she says it. For example, in

lines 7, 12, 20, and 25, Sioux's turn begins with a one word appraisal (okay, exactly, right) with a falling pitch. She then revoices the student response (lines 7 and 20) or clarifies the student's response (line 25). These utterances indicate accepted responses as Sioux initiates a new cycle of action at the end of her turn. However, it appears to be the falling pitch or the revoicing rather than the appraisal word that indicates acceptance. In line 15, for example, there is no appraisal word, just a revoicing of the student's answer, which indicates Sioux's acceptance and initiates a new cycle. On the other hand, in line 10 she responds to Quenton, beginning with the same appraisal word (okay) that she used for accepted responses in lines 7 and 20. However, this time the last syllable of the word okay is drawn out and there is a slightly rising pitch at the end. Rather than revoicing or clarifying Quenton's response, her utterance continues with the modal word "maybe" and a presumed extension of his (inaudible) response. Reading this as Sioux's rejection of Quenton's response, another student jumps in with a different (inaudible) answer that overlaps Sioux's utterance (line 11). Sioux accepts this response with a one-word appraisal (exactly) with a falling intonation and initiates a new cycle. At the end of the excerpt in line 30, we see how Sioux suspends this chain of mediated actions. She not only ignores the raised hand of Student B, she also redefines the situation with the utterance "So today we are going to watch a video that has something in slow motion." Student B recognizes Sioux's initiation of a new cycle within the practice of the mini-lesson and responds by lowering her hand.

Excerpt #2. To further illustrate how students recognized and adjusted to the mediated actions, consider another brief excerpt from the same mini-lesson. After the initial sequence above in which Sioux activated students' prior knowledge, she showed

the students a short video produced by writing expert Barry Lane (Lane, 2007). In the

video, Lane introduces the strategy of "explode a moment" and illustrates it by showing a

hit during a baseball game. For approximately one minute, he takes great care to draw out

each action leading up to the hit from the batter picking up the bat through the pitcher's

wind-up and delivery to the moment the ball makes contact with the bat. Sioux played the

video through once, and then she showed short clips lasting just a few seconds that

focused in on each action. After showing the clip, she asked students to narrate what was

happening. Meanwhile, I was at the front of the room, scribing our shared writing onto a

large piece of bulletin board paper.

The following excerpt is preceded by Sioux playing a three-second clip of the

Barry lane video. She initiates a response cycle asking, "What did he [the batter] do with

his feet?" Answers can be heard from a few students who respond without being directly

called on, but she does not take up their answers or revoice them. She says, "Let's see

that again." All hands go down. She restarts the video. Some students continue to add

answers as the video plays. At the end of the three-second clip, as Sioux is reaching for

the mouse to pause the video, Montez, Jalisa, and Noah raise their hands. Sioux calls on

Corey, who is just out of the view of the camera so it is uncertain if he has his hand raised

prior to being called on.

31. **SR:** Corey. ((points to him))
32. ((Montez lowers hand))
33. **Corey:** He scratched his feet on the ground.
34. ((Noah & Jalisa have their hands in the air during Corey's turn))
35. **SR:** Oka:y, scra::tched:, ((slight pause))
36. ((Montez's hand goes up as soon as she says "okay"; he waves his hand back and
    forth))
37. **SR:** [Let's see,] ((gazes at student at back, right corner of carpet, off camera))
38. **Student A**: [(inaudible)]
39. **SR**: I'm sorry?

40. **Student A**: Rubbing his feet.
41. ((Montez's hand goes down; Jalisa and Noah continue to have their hands in the air))
42. **SR**: Rubbed his feet, ((gaze moves to left side of the carpet)) or::,
43. ((Montez raises his hand again when SR says, "or"; Jalisa and Noah still have their hands raised))
44. **Student B**: [slid.]
45. **Student C**: [rubbed his shoe.]
46. **SR**: ((turns gaze back to right side of room where overlapping responses came from)) Or slid his feet, or:::, ((gazes to left side of room again))
47. (multiple overlapping student responses)
48. **SR**: Rubbed his shoe against the dirt, ((slight nod; gaze switches to different part of room))
49. ((Montez, Jalisa, and Noah continue to have their hands in the air; Montez is waving his hand))
50. **Student D**: [(inaudible)]
51. ((SR points at student D with slight nod))
52. **Quenton**: [kicked the dirt] like bulls do
53. **SR**: I kicked- Oh:::::: Que::nto::n. ((leans head back looking up as she is saying "Oh Quenton"))
54. ((Jalisa, Montez, and Noah all lower their hands during the extended "Oh"))
55. **SR**: Oh my gosh. That is great. ((leans over, brings hand to chin, and gazes at Quenton)) Say that again.
56. **Quenton**: (inaudible) like bulls do (inaudible)
57. **SR**: ((stands up and begins rubbing foot back and forth against carpet)) I kicked in the dirt like bulls do before they're ready to:::,
58. (multiple overlapping student responses)
59. **SR**: ((points at student)) before they're ready to attack, before their ready to charge. ((sits back down))

In this excerpt, the same mediated actions of questioning, answering, raising

hands, and evaluating are taking place. Beginning with her calling on Corey, we can see a

similar I-R-E interaction pattern beginning to form. During this cycle of the mini-lesson,

however, there are a series of only partially accepted responses, which prompts students

to continue offering responses. For example, after Corey responds, Sioux evaluates his

response in line 35. She offers an appraisal word (okay) and she revoices his response. In

our first excerpt this combination of utterances signaled an acceptance of the answer.

Here, however, this same combination can be read at best as a partial acceptance or

possibly a rejection due to Sioux's stretching of the syllables and slightly rising

intonation. Montez reads this as a rejection and his hand immediately shoots up in the air. Student A also picks up on this lukewarm evaluation and Sioux's scanning of the students on the carpet. She chimes in without being called on when Sioux pauses slightly, overlapping Sioux's next bit of speech (lines 37 -38). Sioux only partially accepts Student A's contribution as well, revoicing it and then adding the lengthened word "or" with a rising intonation.

From lines 42 – 51, we see a similar pattern of Sioux revoicing student responses while also inviting more responses with the extended sound and rising intonation of "or." From the beginning of this excerpt, Jalisa, Noah, and Montez have their hands raised almost continuously, and Montez even begins waving his hand to attract Sioux's attention in line 49. However, unlike the last sequence, this time the students whose hands are raised are not being called on. Instead, students are following Sioux's gaze and completing her utterance in response to her open-ended "or" at the end of turns in lines 42 and 46. This results in multiple students talking at once, while Sioux chooses which contributions to revoice and which to ignore. Finally, in line 53, Sioux offers an enthusiastic acceptance of Quenton's response. Jalisa, Noah, and Montez immediately read it as such and lower their hands. Rather than revoicing it herself, Sioux invites Quenton to repeat what he said (line 55- 56). She then further demonstrated her acceptance of this answer by getting up and acting out the action, narrating the next line of our shared writing as she does. She invites the students to finish her utterance in line 57 with a lengthened "to." Based on their multiple overlapping responses, she finishes the narration in line 59, indicating the end this cycle with her final falling pitch and the action of sitting down.

Being socialized to the authority of the teacher. Within just over two minutes of interaction in this mini-lesson we see they ways in which mediated actions became linked together. Even though this mini-lesson took place early in the school year, we can also already see the ways in which the students read and responded to Sioux's verbal and non-verbal cues. These patterns held strong in mini-lessons across the school year, suggesting that the mediated actions became internalized as practice. As such, the practice of the mini-lesson and the cycles within it became a method by which student behavior was regulated based on the authority of the teacher. It was Sioux who initiated and closed cycles of action. It was Sioux who decided who should be called on or whose answer would be revoiced. And it was Sioux who was able to "change the rules of the game" by inviting students to shout out answers rather than waiting to be called on. Indeed, there were instances in later mini-lessons where students might be corrected for shouting out answers. Through revoicing student answers, Sioux also displayed authority. Students did not have to listen closely to other students' responses; they only had to attend to whether or not the response was accepted by Sioux, at which time it was generally revoiced or clarified. The fact that students often raised their hands during or through other students' turns indicated that the only dialogue that mattered was that they would have with the teacher.

Disciplining and managing bodies in space. The previous section demonstrated how students who wanted to be recognized as "good" learned to follow the teachers' cues and manage their behavior appropriately. Sioux attend closely to student behavior. The fact that she would stop a lesson, often mid-sentence or action, indicated the importance of disciplined bodies to students. At Gregory Elementary, student behavior was regulated,

surveilled, and rewarded or punished through a school-wide system of Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a behavioral management system

used by schools around the country and supported by National Technical Assistance

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports associated with the U.S.

Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. According to the PBIS

website, "School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a framework for

improving the effectiveness and equity with which schools deliver educational and social

supports" (Ideas that Work, 2017). The core idea is to teach behavioral expectations just

as you would any other academic subject.

Displayed prominently just outside the door to the school office was a bulletin

board that showed a matrix of rules and behavioral expectations for each space in the

school (e.g. cafeteria, hallway, restrooms, etc.). Within the classroom, there was a series

of posters, each focusing on a different value associated with the PBIS system—safe,

cooperative, respectful, and peaceful. Each poster listed three to five behavioral

expectations. Students who successfully self-regulated their behavior via the PBIS system

were allowed to attend a PBIS party at the end of each quarter, while those who did not

had their behavior further monitored by a daily checklist based on behavior goals that

they had to discuss with an adult in their other than their classroom teacher as a way to

presumably work toward self-monitoring and regulation.

Under this broad umbrella of PBIS, the teachers were also required to keep track

of "Dojo Points," which was a website in which each student had an avatar and they

either had points awarded or taken away based on their daily behavior. In a researcher

journal, Sioux describes this point system, writing:

I think it evolved because some teachers were only punishing, and they never celebrated the positive. They were all about the "missing recess" and missing out on holiday parties, but never highlighting the exemplary behavior of the students... There was no choice with this. We had to submit a weekly report on DOJO points. If the number of points the students earned versus the number of points they lost was not a high enough ratio, it was intimated it was our fault--the teacher's fault.

Not only did this point system inculcate a system of rewards and punishments, it further mandated that teachers be responsible for disciplining and managing student bodies. Sioux would carry around a clipboard in which she would record earned and lost "dojo points" and she would get reports from other teachers and school personnel who monitored student behavior during specials and lunch. Moreover, this system had negative impacts on both student identities and behaviors. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Ayana.

> **KO**: Are you different in 3rd grade?
>
> **Ayana**: Yes.
>
> **KO**: How are you different? What do you think, how are you different in 3rd grade?
>
> **Ayana**: I don't know.
>
> **KO**: Well how are you the same in 3rd grade?
>
> **Ayana**: I'm still bad.
>
> **KO**: What do you mean you're still bad, what does that mean?
>
> **Ayana**: I'm doing bad by points?
>
> **KO**: What points?
>
> **Ayana**: Dojo points.

In this excerpt, Ayana takes up the identity of "bad" student/kid based on the dojo points. Yet, as the interview continues I prompt her to explain how the dojo point system works and it is clear that she doesn't quite understand. She knows that there is a certain number of points she should earn each day, but she also describes a percentage. Ultimately, according to Ayana, these points help to determine whether one gets a "Friday special

recess." I assume that if she is losing a lot of dojo points then she would not earn the

extra recess, but when I ask her how many times she has missed out on it, she answers "I

only missed it once." Despite the fact that Ayana's behavior is good enough that she does

not miss out on the special rewards, because she is accountable to this point system in

which she occasionally loses points, she identifies as a "bad" student.

Another student Lamar, rationalizes his behavior within the dojo point system in a

letter to Sioux that he was required to write after some transgression. He writes:

> Dear Mrs. R,
>
>   I told a story so I won't loose a dojo point and recess. The teacher get mad
> if you tell a story to them. I did not fill my hand hit him at all. I am telling the
> truth to you. Next year I'm going to listen and not talk I'm going to behave next
> year to. And I spinned around in the restroom today.
>
> Sincerely,
> Lamar

In this excerpt, Lamar confesses that he "told a story" so that he wouldn't lose privileges.

This points to an obvious flaw in this system—the fact that a student is motivated to lie in

order to avoid discipline. Yet, equally troubling is the way in which he normalizes the

system through his unprompted confession ("I spinned around in the restroom today.")

and his promises to self-regulate within this system of rewards and punishments during

the following school year. Thus, he appears to accept the logic of the system, at least in

words.

Classroom procedures, such as transitions, lining up and taking restroom breaks,

also worked to regulate and surveil bodies in space. According to Sioux, "The teachers at

[Gregory] had been drilled that 'these students' needed routine. They needed a

dependable, unchanging schedule" (researcher journal, 2/19/17). For example, Sioux

wrote about the expectations for classroom transition routines in her researcher journal:

We were told that smooth, quick and quiet transitions were needed. When it was time for students to come to the carpet, it was supposed to take less than a minute for everyone to get up from their chairs and get onto the carpet. We'd seen Lucy Calkins videos from her laboratory school, where the kids moved like Stepford wives, and were told that when we were observed, the administrators were going to look for evidence of routines. How well did the students know what they were supposed to do? How efficient were the transitions, the movement?

Hallway transitions were closely monitored and regulated as well. Each student had a number that corresponded to the alphabetical order of the class roster. When students were to leave the classroom, Sioux called them by number (e.g. 1 – 5; 6 – 10) and they lined up in numeric order. Before leaving the classroom, they were reminded of the proper behaviors of walking in a single-file line, with their eyes to the front, mouths closed, and hands to themselves. Bathroom breaks were another procedure that was thoroughly routinized, complete with a school-wide schedule of times when teachers could take their students (as a whole class) to the bathroom. Students were not typically allowed to leave the classroom at other times. Sioux writes, "It was almost a prison mentality. Once the students were in the classroom, they were in lock-down" (researcher journal, 2/19/17).

Racialized Discourses of Accountability

This chapter was designed to provide both thick descriptions and discourse analyses to show the ways in which the space of the school and hence the classroom were shaped by discourses of accountability mediated through the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study*. The importance of testing is circulated through both the physical space and the discourses that circulated within it. In this way, complex student identities and subjectivities are reduced to test scores. Across the sections, there is a focus on disciplinary power as maintained through systems of regulation and surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Practices

that serve as forms of hyperdiscipline typically associated with prison time are resemiotized into "best practices" that are designed to maximize learning time and provide much-needed routines for students of color who are presumably "at risk" of failing on standardized tests and presumably lack structure and discipline in their (deficient) home environments (Garcia & De Lissovoy, 2013). The breakdown of the mini-lesson and Lamar's letter to Mrs. R show how students become socialized to accept the authority of the teacher and see such systems as natural and normal. In addition, the attempts by the district to strip down the curriculum in service of presumably raising test scores can be seen in the scripted expectations of the Lucy Calkins curriculum and the required test prep booklets such that "pedagogy delivers to students—and especially to students of color—the mortification they may appear to have escaped in avoiding the discipline system proper" (p. 62). Thus, we see the hidden curriculum of racialized discourses of accountability at work.

Chapter Five: Transforming the Classroom Space

As with all forms of literacy, the ways in which critical literacy is defined and enacted is shaped by the contexts in which it is practiced. The macro-level discourses of accountability that circulated in the school culture hindered our ability to enact a "pedagogy of possibility" (Comber, 2015) in the way Sioux and I had originally imagined; methods of surveillance and regulation were not only used by administrators to manage teachers' behavior, but also by teachers to manage students' behavior. Thus, we can see the circulation of power within the space of the school and the ways in which such structures limited the mediated actions within the classroom space.

Yet, space is constantly being shaped through the practices and interactions of social actors. New literacy practices sprang forth from our attempts to resist the effects of the culture of accountability in the school. Thus, I turn now to the ways in which students and teachers transformed the classroom space to suit their needs and goals. First, I relay the mounting tension that led to the decision to implement a poetry unit and the ways in which the poetry unit (re)positioned students as readers, writers, and thinkers. Then I examine how the students appropriated a technological tool provided to them for writing—the Chromebook—into a method for connecting with other students and circulating discourses associated with popular culture.

The Mandated Curriculum: Responding to Tension

In *A Guide to The Common Core Writing Workshop*, Calkins (2013) writes, "These books provide a detailed model; they are not meant as a script. The end goal is not the teaching that we've described here but the teaching that you, your colleagues, and your children invent together" (p. 4). Despite our desire to enact the mandated curriculum

in this loose way while at the same time attending to what we knew to be best practices in writing, within this school, the Calkins' materials became the mediational means to circulate discourses of accountability. A review of the planning meetings during our first-quarter narrative unit revealed constant intertextual references to the Calkins' *Narrative Unit of Study* and the accompanying on-demand writing assessment that students would take at the end of the quarter. Thus, even as we worked to build shared understanding and common purpose that honored what we knew to be good pedagogy, we simultaneously invited in and responded to the Calkins' units as the official curricular framework and the authority of the on-demand writing assessment as an indicator of student success with writing.

This tension between these competing demands was obvious when Sioux and I met after school in early October to plan the end of the narrative unit and decide instructional next steps. I was pushing for a short unit that would allow kids to more explicitly explore place through writing and continue to develop narrative craft techniques, matching our research agenda. Although she agreed that students hadn't had enough exposure to narrative craft, Sioux felt the administrative pressure that I was largely shielded from as a school volunteer, so she pushed to move to informational writing as was the administrative expectation for second quarter. After much discussion, we found a third option as evidenced in the excerpt below at approximately the 47-minute mark. (NOTE: "Lucy" is a reference to the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Writing curriculum.)

1) **KO**: I guess what I am thinking of in this realm here is just that sort of, that writing that you and I like to do and that we like to teach that just lets kids use their voice and their imagination. You know I'm thinking of the "I Am From" poem, I'm thinking of, I'm thinking of a theme, rather than a genre.

2) **SR**: Right.
3) **KO**: I'm thinking of- (pause)
4) **SR**: You, your family, your roots, your-
5) **KO**: Yeah, your roots, yeah, yeah, places of the heart. I don't know. Places of the heart is what I'm coming up with only because I wanna be leading this in the direction of that idea of we shape places through the stories we tell.

For approximately 2 ½ min. we briefly discuss two excerpts from *Brown Girl* by Jacqueline Woodson as examples of how an author stories place with her writing.

6) **SR**: I guess, my, my desire would be (pause) that if we can, if we can Lucy it up, [Lucy it up]
7) **KO**: [I know]
8) **SR**: If we can, ((lowers voice)) so that if somebody comes in-
9) **KO**: Gotcha.
10) **SR**: Which, you know, when is it, I don't know, sometime soon, but you know the muckity mucks will come through and I don't want my, I don't want [my principal to say]
11) **KO**: [Yeah, (pause) yeah] yeah, you're not doing Lucy.
12) **SR**: Right.
13) **KO**: Got it. (3 second pause) Where's that *If-Then* book? She has a poetry unit in there.
14) **SR**: Yep, but it's last.
15) **KO**: Who cares?
16) **SR**: Okay.
17) **KO & SR**: ((laugh))
18) **KO**: Nobody, I mean, only other third grade teachers are going to know that you're- If anybody asks, you can say, oh, I'm doing the *If-Then* out of the Lucy book.
19) **SR**: Oh, there it is. ((looking at the *If-Then* book)) Well that's-
20) **KO**: And it doesn't even say when you have to- It says "If you want to teach your students to become more conscious of the crafting and language decisions that writers make, then you might want to teach this unit."
21) **SR**: ooohhh
22) **KO**: We do!
23) **SR**: Yes! That sounds marvelous. You're brilliant, Katie.

In lines 1 – 5, both Sioux and I forwarded the research agenda and our desire to

have students write about things that are meaningful to them. On lines 6 - 12, however,

the authority of the mandated curriculum and the "muckity mucks" who enforce it

entered into the dialogue. The suggestion, however, that we only needed to keep up

appearances led us to consider the *If…Then…Curriculum*, which was one of the resource

books provided in the curriculum set. This *If…Then…*poetry unit was much less detailed than the core units in the set, spanning a total of 16 pages compared to the 175 pages that comprised the narrative unit of study. We realized that we could do a poetry unit that would be drawn from the "official" Calkins curriculum; however, the looser structure of the unit would allow us to pull in other professional resources and use poetry to focus on places and spaces in the students' homes and community. What we didn't realize at that time was how much this poetry unit would (re)shape the classroom space.

Providing access to sophisticated writing techniques. We spent a total of four weeks immersed in poetry. To start our unit, students visited a series of poetry centers intended to get them exploring and creating poetry. These included a found poetry station; a magnetic poetry station; a station where students could view and respond to spoken word videos from YouTube; a station where they could choose a "borrowed" first line from another work and then write from that first line; and a station where they could explore a number of interesting objects and work on sensory writing. Through this immersion in the genre, students had a chance to explore and play with words. This was a low-risk introduction to the genre, which sparked their writing.

We also drew on mentor texts. We read various poems to students and asked them to imitate the structure of the poem, which provided the scaffolding necessary to get students' ideas flowing. For example, students read and analyzed "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyons. Each student wrote a poem based on this structure, and we hung each poem along with the student-author's picture out in the hall for parent-teacher conferences. Not only did this create an authentic audience for writing, it also allowed us to begin exploring home spaces and the community of Ferguson through writing. We

continued this exploration of community places and spaces with a field trip to a district-owned nature preserve. During our visit, we planned a variety of activities to help students closely observe and respond to a natural environment in their community through poetry.

As students crafted poetry on self-selected topics ranging from family members to basketball to pie to nature, we explicitly taught students poetic techniques through our mini-lessons. We analyzed authors' use of craft techniques such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, metaphor, simile, and sensory details. We taught them about line breaks, stanzas, effective use of white space, and punctuation choices within poetry. We examined how poets begin and end poems and how they develop patterns through repetition. Moreover, we normalized the idea that these techniques were things they could (and should) use too, and we asked them to be purposeful in their use of such techniques. Toward the end of the unit, we asked students to choose three poems to revise and we performed a poetry reading for the other third grade class.

The students' uptake of poetic techniques could be seen in the poems they created and in how they spoke of their poetry. For example, one student, Maya wrote the following poem[2] called "November:"

> November celebrates
> my birthday
> with ballons,
> streamers,
> gift table,
> November
> throws
> my skating
> party on

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[2] Student writing samples are included throughout this chapter and those that follow. All spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and features of text, such a bold, italic, or underline, are copied directly from the original. Font and some minor spacing issues are changed for sake of consistency and presentation.

> black Friday
> and it
> skates with
> me, never
> gives up
> when it
> falls down,
> if she
> falls down
> I fall down,
> I love
> November

Later, Maya discusses this poem in a semi-structured interview conducted by Sioux. The

following is an excerpt from the interview:

1) **SR**: Um, what strategies have you used in your poems?
2) **Maya**: Like in "November" I used when November skated with me and-
3) **SR**: And that's what?
4) **Maya**: That's what I used.
5) **SR**: And what strategy is that?
6) **Maya**: A good strategy.
7) **SR**: Yeah, but you said November skated.
8) **Maya**: ((nods head to indicate yes while smiling))
9) **SR**: Can a month skate?
10) **Maya**: ((nods head to indicate no while smiling))
11) **SR**: So what strategy is that? When we have things-
12) **Maya**: ((Looking off camera at an anchor chart)) Personal fiction.
13) **SR**: Personification, yep, personification. Where you have something do something that only a person can do, yep. Um, any other strategies that you used in your poems?
14) **Maya**: Um...it was kind of ((pointing at anchor chart)) both of them.
15) **SR**: Okay, you used a little bit of alliteration?
16) **Maya**: Mm hmm and personication. (*mispronunciation of the word*)
17) **SR**: Personification, I know it's kind of a tongue twister. Per-son-i-fi-cation (*emphasizes each syllable*). I have to think about it too. Per-son-i-fi-cation (*again emphasizing each syllable*)
18) **Maya**: (*repeats SR*) Per-son-i-fi-cation.
19) **SR**: Very good. Go home tonight and you can say, (*exaggerated sophistication to her voice*) "Mom I was talking about when I used personification in my poem." And your mom will be like, "WHAT!?"

It is clear that Maya took up and purposely used the strategy of personification. In line 2,

she identified an example of the strategy in her work ("I used when November skated

with me."). Her smiles and body language in response to Sioux's questions in lines 8 and 10 suggested that she was aware that she was using a poetic technique she had been taught; however, she did not yet have the exact vocabulary to describe the technique. In lines 13 – 18, Sioux extended Maya's understanding of this technique by helping her to name it properly. Then, in line 19, Sioux deemed this technique a noteworthy one by suggesting that Maya's mother would be impressed if Maya told her she used it in her poem. Through all of these moves, from the initial teaching to the final line excerpted in the transcript, Sioux not only helped Maya access this technique, but she also helped her to see herself as one who uses this technique to create poetry—in other words, she helped Maya see herself as a poet. In the next section, I explore additional ways in which this poetry unit helped reposition students as writers, rather than mere test takers.

Repositioning students as writers. During the poetry unit, Sioux and I sought to position students as people who had important things to say and who used writing as a form of expression. We knew that if we were going to have students invest time and energy into writing well, we would need to help them see themselves as writers and find ways to have success with writing. In part, we were able to accomplish this because poetry is an accessible genre for young children. Not only were they freed from conventions and given time to explore, they were also taught some specific techniques to apply to their poems. In addition, students had two opportunities to "publish" their work for real audiences. The first was the display of the "I Am From" poems along with student-author photos in the hallway for parent-teacher conferences. The second was through the poetry reading that we did for the other third grade class at the conclusion of this unit.

In addition to the structural changes in this unit, the repositioning of students as writers can be observed in the interviews that Sioux conducted with students. The mere fact that Sioux asked students to engage in this genre of interaction signaled the first shift. No longer were students being asked to compare their writing to a pre-defined checklist from the official curriculum. Rather, they were being asked such questions as: What three pieces have you chosen to revise? Why did you choose that piece? What strategies or techniques did you use in that piece? Where do you get inspiration for your poems? How have you changed as a writer from last year? These types of questions are more likely to be asked of an acclaimed poet laureate than they are of third grade students. Indeed, some students were not quite sure how to answer the questions as evidenced by their body language and lack of response during the interviews. However, Sioux masterfully used wait time to communicate that a response was expected. It was not unusual for students to pause ten seconds or more as they attempted to articulate their thoughts. Occasionally, Sioux would say, "Are you done with that answer or do you need more time to think?" However, she rarely moved on to another question without a response of some type. In this way, she communicated to students that writers think about and talk about their process.

Not all student writers were shy to talk about their process; some of them took up the line of questioning as would a published author in a televised interview. For example, Noah took on a somewhat unusual serious demeanor when discussing his poetry. Sioux honored his seriousness and responded in turn. The following is an excerpt from Noah's interview. In it, he is describing how he came up with a poem called "Turtle Football"

which he wrote while observing some turtles swimming in an aquarium at a local nature

reserve.

1) **SR**: What about the football one, why does that poem appeal to you? Why do you want to work on that?
2) **Noah**: Because when we was at [the nature reserve], me and Lamar was acting like that um, that the turtles were playing football, um, cuz they was wrestling, wrestling, they look like they was doing tackling and stuff and me and Lamar was making up stuff and the top of the tank is the touchdown cuz the little ones was making touchdowns on the big one.
3) **SR**: You know that's what writers do. They look at the world in a different way. See I looked at those same turtles that you looked at, but I didn't see football players. I didn't see guys doing tackling. So that's pretty interesting.

In this excerpt, we can see how Noah doesn't shy away from the question of how he

came up with the poem, "Turtle Football." Although the subject of the poem hints at

silliness, he gives a serious recounting of the observation that led to his poem. Sioux

honors this in line three by equating what he did to "what writers do." She praised him

for his ability to "look at the world in a different way."

This method of honoring students' ideas in all forms was evident with another

student as well. Quenton was one of our lowest readers coming into third grade. His

struggles with handwriting and orthography made it difficult for him to fluently express

his thinking through writing. Sioux realized he had much more to say than he was able to

capture efficiently on his paper or Chromebook, so she or I worked with him as often as

possible to scribe his stories and poems so that they would be recorded quickly, before

his focus on the mechanics of writing made him lose his train of thought. As a result of

this, he began to see himself in a new light, as did his classmates who were moved by his

narrative piece about his cousin's death. Below is an excerpt from Sioux's interview with

Quenton, in which he verbalizes his changing identity as a writer:

1) **SR:** Has your opinion of yourself changed, like what you think of yourself as a writer, has it changed this year compared to second grade?
2) **Quenton:** ((nodding yes)) Mm hmm.
3) **SR:** What do you think of yourself as a writer right now?
4) **Quenton:** A really good writer. In second grade I would say I thought I wasn't so good until I came to third grade.
5) **SR:** You didn't. How come?
6) **Quenton:** Because I couldn't spell the words right and wrote really sloppy and, um, I usually write too slow (pause) and when I try to read it, it wouldn't say exactly what I thought it would say.
7) **SR:** Is that really the important things of a writer? Their handwriting, or how fast, or-
8) **Quenton:** Mmm hnn ((emphatically nodding head no))
9) **SR:** Mrs. O'Daniels and I think you're a great writer. We think everybody in here writes some brilliant things.
10) **Quenton:** ((nods head yes))
11) **SR:** Why do you think that we think Quenton is a great writer? Don't think about spelling, don't think about handwriting-
12) **Quenton:** Cuz what I say, and what exactly is, what exactly I put down and when I'm writing, what I'm saying.

In this excerpt, we can see Quenton not only owning the identity of "a good writer" (line 4), but he is also able to express a sophisticated understanding that being a good writer is about more than mechanics. Instead it's about "what exactly I put down" and "what I'm saying" (line 14). Quenton left our school at the end of January. Given his struggles with reading, as well his difficulty with graphic resources, it is unlikely that Quenton scored in the proficient range on the state test. However, we see in the above excerpt a student who is developing a literate identity apart from that of the formal testing culture that infiltrates schools, along with a teacher who is explicitly encouraging him to do so.

During the four weeks of the poetry unit, the classroom space was changed from a place where students write to be assessed to a space where students write to express. Thus, even though we returned to the "official curriculum" to complete the core units for informational and opinion writing after this, many students' newfound sense of themselves as poets and writers remained. I turn now to the ways in which students

appropriated a technological tool of writing—the Chromebook—for their own purposes, which also served to expand and transform the classroom space.

Chromebooks as Mediational Means

During the first-quarter narrative unit of study, I suggested to Sioux that we allow students to draft their stories on Chromebooks. Sioux had a classroom set of Chromebooks, some of which had been provided by the district and some which she had gotten donated through the Donor's Choose website. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Sioux was hesitant. Through a blog post on October 1, 2015 Sioux expressed her concern that the students' progress would be slow. It was getting close to the end of the first quarter when the narrative unit needed to be wrapped up. Yet, she kept her reservations to herself and went ahead with the plan to have the students draft on the Chromebooks. Upon reflection, she realized that even though the initial progress was slow, the students' ability to make changes and improvements to their writing was more easily facilitated through the use of the Google tools on the Chromebooks. Thus, for the remainder of the year, the Chromebooks became a regular technological tool that students used to compose and otherwise communicate.

In keeping with the original purpose of using Chromebooks for composing in the classroom, Sioux and I introduced students to Google Slides, Google Docs, and Google Classroom. We walked students through the process of creating a folder in their Google Drive, and instructed them on how to share it with us. We then requested that they put all of their compositions in this folder, so that the documents would be automatically shared with us. In addition, we occasionally used Google Classroom to push out websites or shared documents to students. For example, during second quarter when we were

working on researching famous placemakers, we shared a table of contents with students

to help them structure their writing. Each student was able to access this by going to the

Google classroom page. Likewise, we helped students set up a shared document with

their research partners so that they could collaboratively take notes. Thus, we showed

students how to use the collaborative tools that Google offered to meet our academic

literacy purposes. However, the students devised other ways to use the features we taught

them.

It was early in December, still during our "famous placemakers" informational

writing unit, when I first realized that the students were appropriating the collaborative

tools for their own uses. In fieldnotes, I describe how I had been working with a group of

three girls who were researching Rosa Parks. They were struggling to locate and identify

important information beyond the most well-known facts of Rosa Park's life. I was

guiding them through the process of using headings and subheadings to determine

importance. Below are portions of my fieldnotes from December 2, 2015 (voice memo

recorded on the way home and later transcribed):

> *So I'm trying to show her, you know, that's probably where you'd find something. In the meantime, Jasmine says something along the lines of, "I'm tired of this. I don't want to do this anymore. I'm just going to go back to texting." And Candice chimes in something about "texting," and I'm like, "What are you talking about?" And it comes out that a group of kids has been sharing Google Docs back and forth and sort of writing notes or what the girls are calling texting back and forth. So, you know, in the meantime Desean's telling Candice not to delete that because it's going to delete Montez's work. And this is about five to one now, so I know that recess is going to be soon, so I stop everybody and I say, "Listen if you've shared an item with somebody else you're giving them access to edit that item and you probably don't want to do that. You know, because that person could mess up your work. So if you've shared something with somebody, go ahead and unshare it. Take them off."*
> *When we were out at recess I said to Sioux, you know, maybe we need to shut down the Chromebooks. Let them see that this is a privilege to work with them and, you know, just use pencil paper. She agreed. So when we came back*

and we told the students to log off the Chromebooks and shut down and I put them all away. And then I went through and I started logging on their accounts so that I could see the activity on the Google Drive. And, you know, so I could see that there were groups of students who were sharing with other students and, there was one document where they had been sort of writing notes back and forth and I'm imagining this was the texting one.

> *All of a sudden it occurs to me that the only reason I was told that they were texting is because the kids still don't see me in this teacher role. And I really need to, I really need to try and not be that. I need to back off. I need to be the researcher and not the teacher, so that maybe they'll open up to me about some of this stuff. If they perceive me as the teacher then, it's done. So I was mad at myself for jumping into the teacher role. And as I'm sitting here going through their accounts and seeing the activity on them, the interesting thought that occurred to me was that this is subversive writing, you know, here we want them writing. And, we want them writing what we want them to write. But here they're finding this-- and not that it was like extensive writing-- but they're finding this way of, you know, it's sort of like that subversive writing like the, you know, passing notes and things like that. But I just thought—and I said as much to Sioux at the end of the day—maybe we need to tap into this. Because it wasn't just this texting activity. They had shared their writing, they had shared poems, they had shared small moments stories. Now, what the other person had read or done with that, I don't know, but maybe we need to tap into this. And maybe rather than making this a "no-no" maybe we need to support this and incorporate it into some of the writing we do.*

In my fieldnotes, my dawning realization of how the kids have appropriated the sharing feature on the Google docs, as well as the research implications of this become clear. In terms of the production of space, I think this demonstrates a few insights. First, the students, as agentic beings, took the tools that were provided to them and imaginatively used them for an alternative purpose than what they had been intended by those in authority (i.e. the teachers). Thus, the Chromebooks became a mediational means to connect with others and the Google sharing features became resemiotized into the practice of texting.

Through that alone, the students reshaped the classroom space. However, it is also evident in my fieldnotes above that my habitus is affected by my teacher identity. Immersed in figured worlds of "teacher as authority," particularly within this school

culture, my immediate reaction is to reassert authority and take the power (i.e.,

Chromebooks) away from the students. Upon recognizing the ways in which the

students' interest in and creative repurposing of the Google tools might further engage

them in academic literacy, as well the research implications of "subversive writing," I

attempt to modify my habitus. Thus, my identity as a teacher-researcher is also

transformed within this newly reshaped classroom space brought about by the students'

imaginative use of the Chromebooks.

As a mediational means, the Chromebooks expanded the boundaries of the

classroom space and opened up possibilities for exerting power and expressing unique

identities. I continue to explore the theme of identity in the next section as I present the

case study of Celso and the ways in which literate practices focused on home spaces

helped Celso express his unique identity within the classroom space.

Celso: Exploring Intersections of Identity

Celso is mixed-race, part Latino and part Pacific-Islander. He was born in Hawaii

and lived there for several years before moving first to Las Vegas for a short time and

then to Missouri. His first years as a Missourian were spent in a different city and a

different school, and he was new to Ferguson at the beginning of the school year. Thus,

unlike many of his classmates, he did not have any direct experience with the protesting

and unrest that took place during the fall of 2014. Both Hawaii and Las Vegas held

special significance for him—Hawaii because it was where his earliest memories

stemmed from and Las Vegas because of the family connections that he had there which

had resulted in multiple visits, including one during the school year. In addition, Celso

was a gifted artist and enjoyed using drawing to express his creativity.

Celso began exploring his various home places through his "Where I'm From" poem first drafted in October. The first two lines reference Hawaii and Las Vegas respectively: "I am from a big island with water around it / I am from a big gold city with memories around it". During our community mapping unit, in response to the mentor texts we were reading about home spaces, Celso drafted a piece called "Hawaii" and a piece called "Las Vegas." Celso used sensory imagery and similes to story those places. For example, in his piece titled "Hawaii," he wrote of the sound of Hawaiian music and the smell of the air upon waking in the morning. In his "Las Vegas" piece, he wrote about his aunt crying when she first saw him during a visit because it had been so long since she had seen him. Then at the end of the piece he wrote, "When we have to go, it stared agen, teers went down just like rain drop going down my wendow." Both pieces show him independently taking up techniques taught during the poetry unit, even though it was months later.

Other writing pieces during the community mapping unit showed him grappling with the complexities of his current home, Ferguson. For example, in his opinion essay about a community problem he wanted to fix, he expressed his concern with guns and shooting with the opening line, "**Ferguson has to stop shooting innocent people.**" Initially it remains unclear whether he is referencing the Ferguson Police Department with his personification of Ferguson; however, later in the piece he writes, "They should get rid of guns so only army people and police can have guns because I don't think bad people should have guns." This suggests that he was commenting on the problem of guns in our society more generally. In another piece titled "This is for St. Louis," he wrote, "People was gone because there was shooting and tear-gas, the FBI was shooting too.

People was drawing, painting for people's lives. This is for ST,Louis and for all around the world. **We love Ferguson and Ferguson love us**". This piece indicates his awareness of the details of the unrest during the fall of 2014, even though he had not lived in Ferguson at the time. He seems to express surprise that "the FBI" was part of the unrest as indicated by the way he separates them from the "people" he references more generally at the beginning of the excerpt.

Despite the somewhat dark tone of both pieces, he demonstrates his desire for change and possibly, his own change in his thinking. For example, in the first piece he contrasts the "innocent people" who do not deserve to be shot with the "bad guys" who shouldn't have guns. Although he creates an either/or dichotomy, oversimplifying the problem, his call to "get rid of guns" shows that he imagines a different possible future. Later, in the second piece, he describes the people who are making a difference as the everyday folks who were "drawing, painting for people's lives," not those, including "the FBI," who were shooting and using tear gas. Even Celso himself, who has dedicated this writing to "ST,Louis and for all around the world," seems to be positioning himself as one who is in solidarity with the people of his community. Thus, he seems to be considering ways in which everyday actions and people can make a positive impact. In this way, he demonstrates that there are more perspectives to be considered than just that of the "innocent person" and the "bad guys."

This grappling with some of the dangerous realities of Ferguson paired with his desire for a better future showed up in another untitled piece as well. Here we also see Celso's appropriation of pop culture for means of completing academic literacy tasks. The following is Celso's experimentation with writing a song (inspired by "Hall of

Fame" by The Script featuring will.i.am) while exploring the possibilities for his final

class project—a video about home and/or community:

(hey)
(part 1)Let's our freedom
Be
(ohhhh)
You can be the super hero
to save our community
{ohhhh}
Don't let bad
Gus
Beat you down
(ohhhh)
Let our freedom
Be
{ohhhh}
(part2) I was that kid
That s our war
Yes
I was that hero
To save
our community from
bad gus
And
Wars
{ohhhhh}

In this piece, he seems to be comparing the unrest in Ferguson with a war. Indeed,

when scanning Google images after searching on Ferguson, as we did during our video

juxtaposition activity, one can see the armored tanks, military style dress, tear gas, and

weaponry of the police officers, as well as the burning cars and destroyed buildings.

Moreover, in this piece, the "bad gus [guys]" remain undefined. For Celso, the "bad gus

[guys]" are those who "beat you down." Given his call for only "army people and police"

to have guns in his opinion essay referenced in the previous paragraph, paired with his

recognition of the non-neutrality of the police officers ("the FBI") in his "This is for St.

Louis" piece, Celso seems to be expressing a complex understanding that those who are

considered "the bad gus [guys]" may depend on one's social perspective and position.

Yet, he again harkens back to his belief that the "hero" can be an everyday person

through his choice of pronouns. He emphasizes that "*you* can be the super hero" and tells

the reader that he is the hero ("*I* was that hero"). Even though he has lived in Ferguson

for less than a year, Celso again displays his solidarity with the people of his community

when he uses the word "our" in front of community and writes, "Let our freedom / Be."

However, he also leaves community undefined, suggesting that his desire to "be the hero"

may be broader than Ferguson alone.

Celso ultimately ended up choosing to revise his "Where I'm From" poem for his

video for the Room 21 Film Festival. Within this piece, he was able to bring together the

multiple places that mean home to him. He kept the original two lines about Hawaii and

Las Vegas, but also included pictures and details related to his home space in Ferguson.

However, it is Celso's use of multimodal design elements that gives the piece the greatest

impact. For this piece, he used black and white designs and lettering along with both

Google images and photographs that he took of his home spaces to create a digital video

of his poem set to music. In the beginning of the video, as a lead-in to his poem, he chose

to incorporate two black and white geometric designs with the words "This is who I am"

as instrumental piano music plays. The images seem to be a nod to his artistic creativity,

and his choice to use this visual element in addition to photographs is unique among all

his peers. As the video transitions to an image of Hawaii and the first line of his poem,

the music becomes more intense with a string instrument joining the piano. The music

continues to build with photos and text transitioning every few seconds until he reaches

the final lines of his poem. He writes, "I am from a happy school / and a happy life." The

photos accompanying the text change from a photo of the school to a photo of Celso. Then the music softens again, and he returns to a similar type of black and white design as was used in the intro, this time with movement. The 1:15 minute video ends with simple white words on a black background that say, "This is my life / What is yours". From the music to the visual elements to the final question, he draws the viewer into the piece. (Celso's video can be viewed here: https://goo.gl/nNMiRx;).

Although Celso's command of the mechanics of Standard English was inconsistent, poetry and poetic devices offered him an accessible way to experiment with craft moves and develop his writing voice. He also found ways to seamlessly integrate out-of-school discourses of pop culture into his writing. Each of these, in turn, became important ways for Celso to express multiple intersections of his identity and his home spaces.

Toward a Hybridized Classroom Space

During the poetry unit we were freed from the "script" of the core Calkins units and the eventual results of an on-demand writing assessment which could presumably determine whether or not students had "success" with this unit. Thus, our planning conversations focused on day-to-day formative assessments to guide our instructional decision making; during this unit, the third voice of the "official curriculum" did not enter our planning conversations as it had during the narrative unit. Our instructional focus shifted to how we would help student writers, rather than how we would prepare students to be successful with an on-demand, end-of-unit assessment. Because of this we were able to focus on helping students find and develop their writing voices and explore their identities through poetry.

Students also found imaginative uses for mediational means. Through the use of Chromebooks, students expand and reshaped the classroom space as they connected with others. Sometimes this was done alongside and in service of academic literacy, such as when they shared their writing with others. At other times it was simply to express their unique identities as youth growing up in an age of ever-changing methods of communication. As evidenced by both the student writing in this chapter and their agentic and repurposed use of Chromebooks, the students demonstrated a level of communicative competence and sophisticated thinking that is belied by their standardized test scores. Thus, they were able to resist the dehumanizing effects of standardized test scores to let themselves be seen and heard.

Chapter Six – Home and Community Spaces

The impetus for this collaborative action research study stemmed from the desire to help students placemake Ferguson through words, image, and action. Although this is something that any group of students could do anywhere across the planet, Sioux and I felt it was particularly relevant to the students of Gregory Elementary because of the ways in which the shooting of Michael Brown and the civic unrest that followed had forced many in the St. Louis area to face reality about what kind of place St. Louis is and what kind of place it should be moving forward. We wanted our students to be a part of that conversation. In this chapter, I begin by providing some context about the St. Louis region as a whole and Ferguson specifically. Then I describe the ways in which Sioux and I tried to engage students in placemaking Ferguson through a community mapping study. Finally, I provide glimpses of the ways in which the children storied Ferguson by drawing on the voices of the children themselves. I end with a close look at one student, Ayana, and the ways in which she used her voice to story her community.

St. Louis Region

Evidence of racial disparity and/or discrimination in the St. Louis area can be found in relation to the justice system (e.g. Balko, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015); healthcare (e.g. Washington University in St. Louis and Saint Louis University, 2014); and education (e.g. Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2016; Losen, Hodson, Keith II, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). A report compiled by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments (2014), an organization located in St. Louis, states, "Among its peer regions, St. Louis…tends to have a wider gap between whites and blacks than many of the peer regions on a range of social, economic and health

indicators" (p. 1). Yet, these findings are not surprising given the geographical

segregation within the 91 municipalities in the metropolitan St. Louis region.

Based on 2010 census data, researchers identified St. Louis as one of the most

segregated cities in the United States using a common measure of racial segregation, the

dissimilarity index (Glaeser & Vigdor, 2012; Logan & Stults, 2011). Indeed, a BBC

documentary released in 2012 drew attention to a particular street in St. Louis, Delmar

Avenue, providing statistics that highlighted a racial and economic divide as determined

by whether a person resides north or south of Delmar (Strasser, 2012). Rothstein (2014),

however, asserts that St. Louis' segregated living conditions are not unique, nor are they

random. He points to explicitly racist actions by federal, state, and local governments

during the 20th century as determinants for contemporary segregation patterns. These

include racially explicit zoning decisions; segregated housing projects; restrictive

neighborhood covenants; government subsidies for white suburban development; denial

of adequate municipal services in African American neighborhoods; urban renewal and

redevelopment programs; real estate and financial sector policies that promoted

residential segregation; and dual labor markets that made housing less affordable for

African Americans.

When examined as a whole region, St. Louis' racial demographic composition is

as follows: 75 percent white; 18 percent black; 2 percent Hispanic or Latino; 2 percent

Asian; and 3 percent other. Given the patterns of residential segregation by race, many of

St. Louis' 91 municipalities do not reflect the overall demographics of the region.

Because school districts in St. Louis are populated by geographic proximity, they too

reflect the demographic patterns of the communities from which they are drawn, rather

than the region as a whole. As a result, young people often grow up only really knowing

St. Louis within the boundaries of their particular school district, neighborhood, or

municipality.

After the shooting of Michael Brown, the divisions amongst St. Louisans were

exposed for all to see. Yet the protests in the days immediately following the shooting of

Michael Brown stem from a long history of fighting for civil rights in St. Louis.

Beginning with the first civil rights demonstration in 1819 to protest Missouri's inclusion

into the United States as a slave state to the formation of civil rights activist groups (e.g.

Congress on Racial Equality and The Freedom of Resistance Committee) in the mid-

twentieth century to famous civil rights battles fought in the Supreme Court (e.g. the

Dred Scott decision, Shelley vs. Kraemer), black St. Louisans along with white allies

have long struggled for equitable laws and treatment for people of color and other

marginalized populations (Moffitt, 2017; Wilson, 2017). The circumstances that led to

the most recent struggle for civil rights in St. Louis—that of unfair policing and

municipal tactics in Ferguson—is discussed in the next section.

Ferguson: From Commuter Suburb to "Among the Most Dangerous in the World"

In May of 2016, while speaking to a reporter from the New York Times

magazine, Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump stated, "There are places in

America that are among the most dangerous in the world. You go to places like Oakland.

Or Ferguson. The crime numbers are worse. Seriously" (Raasch, 2016). Although Mr.

Trump has never been to Ferguson, he, like many others, probably formed impressions

via the national media in August of 2014. During that time, media organizations focused

primarily on the burning, looting, and military-style police response that was happening

on just two roads in Ferguson and neighboring Dellwood—West Florissant Road and

Canfield Drive. Not only did this serve to reduce the whole of Ferguson to a small slice

of its area, it also overshadowed the peaceful protests and other community action taking

place within Ferguson and beyond. However, in the days and weeks that followed,

journalists and others began to inquire into how Ferguson became the powder keg that it

turned out to be. Much like the St. Louis region as a whole, Ferguson's history and

politics were built around complex issues of race and racism.

Ferguson, Missouri was incorporated as a city in 1894, but its history dates back

to the 1850s when William B. Ferguson deeded a strip of land to the North Missouri

Railroad (later Wabash Railroad) to be used as a train depot. The city developed around

this stop, known as Ferguson Station, becoming a major hub for freight and passenger rail

traffic by the late 1800s (CivicPlus. 2017). Due to its growing popularity as a suburb for

executives working in St. Louis, over 40 commuter trains a day ran between Ferguson

and St. Louis, and a streetcar line was opened in 1900 to connect Ferguson and

Kirkwood, a growing suburb to the south (Nine Network & Ezell, 2014). Throughout the

first part of the first part of the 20th century, Ferguson continued to grow due in large part

to racist policies of the Federal Housing Administration, which insured mortgages for

white families only and financed construction of neighborhoods with restricted covenants

and deeds. It was the late 1960s before a handful of African Americans were able to buy

homes in the white suburb of Ferguson, albeit with much difficulty (Rothstein, 2014).

Neighboring Ferguson to the southwest is the once-thriving city of Kinloch, the

oldest Missouri community incorporated by African Americans (Nine Network & Ezell,

2014). Initially marketed to whites as a commuter suburb in the late 1890s, Kinloch Park,

as it was known then, became an African American enclave after an African American woman, Mrs. "B", and her husband purchased property with the help of a white friend. Upon discovering their African American neighbor, the white families living there sold their property and others refused to move in. One development company tried to attract white investors by promising a large return on their investment when they sold to black buyers looking to move in. Like Ferguson, the population continued to grow throughout the first part of the 20th century and was incorporated as a city in 1948. By the 1950s, Kinloch boasted over 80 businesses, its own police and fire departments, a handful of churches of various denominations, as well as two elementary schools and a high school to serve its growing population (Wright, 2000).

Until the mid-1960s, Ferguson was known as a "sundown town." The Ferguson city council went to great lengths to keep the black and white communities separated by physically blocking the main connecting road between the two to prevent the flow of traffic, but keeping another secondary road open so that service workers (e.g. housekeepers and nannies) could get to Ferguson from Kinloch (Nine Network & Ezell, 2014; Rothstein, 2014). They also proposed erecting a ten-foot chain link fence along the entire border between the communities; however, that never came to fruition (Nine Network & Ezell, 2014). The schools were segregated by race and would be until a federal court order in 1975 that ruled the schools must integrate (Rothstein, 2014; Wright, 2000).

According to census data, in 1970 Ferguson's population was less than one percent African American. It wasn't until 1968 that Ferguson saw its first African American homeowner, Larman Williams; however, intervention on the part of a white

pastor was necessary to facilitate the sale. Other African Americans slowly moved to Ferguson throughout the 1970s as displaced families were forced to relocated after the demolition of public housing high rises in the City of St. Louis and as a result of other urban renewal and redevelopment programs. By 1980, Ferguson's population was 14% African American (Rothstein, 2014). In the 1980s, Lambert International Airport bought out 215 acres of land in Kinloch and over 1,300 properties for an airport expansion that never happened. The displaced residents moved to neighboring Berkeley or Ferguson, and Kinloch declined due to its decreased tax base (Hamilton, 2010).

By 1990, Ferguson's population was 25% African American. Discriminatory practices by the real estate and banking industries continued to fuel the demographic shift in the 1990s and early 2000s. For example, as late as 1995 practices of "blockbusting" were alleged by a St. Louis newspaper. Although prohibited by Missouri's Real Estate Commission, this was a strategy in which white homeowners were solicited by real estate agents after black families began buying homes in a neighborhood and encouraged to move before their property values declined. Once the ensuing panic and "white flight" had sufficiently depreciated home values, agents sold the homes to African American families at inflated costs or subdivided the homes to be rented. In the 2000s, subprime mortgage lending practices targeted at growing black communities coupled with alleged discriminatory lending in areas where African Americans were minority made it possible for more low-income African Americans to purchase housing in Ferguson, albeit at great economic hardship after the housing market declined in 2008-2009. Thus, by 2000 the population of Ferguson was 52% African American and by 2010 it was 67% African American (Rothstein, 2014).

Even though Ferguson had a population that was two-thirds African American by the time of Michael Brown's death in 2014, black citizens did not see equal representation or treatment in civic and political life. For example, the mayor of Ferguson, as well as five of six city council members, were white in 2014 (CivicPlus, 2017). A similar pattern could be seen in the racial make-up of the school board, despite the fact that 75% of the students in the district were African American. In addition, of the 54 police offices in the Ferguson Police Department, only four were African American. A 2015 Department of Justice report on the investigation into the Ferguson police department, city offices, and municipal courts revealed patterns of economically motivated municipal practices that disproportionately affected African Americans; civil rights violations; discriminatory law enforcement practices and racial bias; and a general erosion of community trust (DOJ, 2015).

Many changes have taken place in Ferguson as a result of the civic unrest after Michael Brown's death. In November of 2014, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon convened the Ferguson Commission. This independent group of 16 diverse volunteers was tasked with proposing recommendations to promote healing and positive change in the St. Louis region. Their report, digitally released in September of 2015, called for action in the areas justice reform, education, healthcare, employment, and racial equity. In addition, in light of the findings of the Department of Justice, the city of Ferguson entered into a consent decree in January of 2016 in which they agreed to make significant changes in the policing practices of the Ferguson Police Department and the ways in which the municipal code is enforced (U.S. District Court Eastern District of Missouri, 2016).

Ferguson also swore in its first African American police chief, Delrish Moss, in May of 2016.

Ferguson is a complex web of inter-connected, overlapping, and contested spaces, both material and interactional, that were shaped overtime and continue to be negotiated in the years following the shooting of Michael Brown. As such, Ferguson cannot be reduced to a singular narrative or description. In the next section, I review the learning activities that students engaged in as they explored the complexities of their homes and community.

Community Mapping to (Re)Discover

Community mapping is an approach that has been used by teachers working in communities of practice to collect community data and then engage in deep reflection in order to create contexts for learning that build upon and validate children's cultural and linguistic resources (e.g. Dunsmore, Ordonez-Jasis and Herrera, 2012; Ordonez-Jasis & Jasis, 2011). According to Dunsmore, Ordonez-Jasis and Herrera (2012), "Community mapping is an inquiry-based method in which 'mappers' discover, gather, and analyze a rich array of resources from a specific geographic area to develop new understanding of the cultural and linguistic practices that make up community life" (p. 3). We drew on this approach with our students, positioning them both as researchers of their community and placemakers whose words, images, and actions would help shape the community.

We began our community mapping unit by asking each student to individually complete the first two questions of a simple KWL – what do you know about Ferguson and what do you want to know about Ferguson? We then compiled all the students' answers into one document and shared it with the class through Google Classroom. We

showed students how to use the comments feature on Google Docs and gave them time to

read, comment, ask questions, and voice observations about what they noticed about their

collective answers to those questions. We wanted students' wonderings and curiosities to

set the tone for the unit.

From there we wanted to help students to understand that there were many

different perspectives on Ferguson and what kind of a place it is. We did this by

juxtaposing three web resources. First, we showed them a YouTube video titled

"Ferguson Sunday Parkways" (https://youtu.be/BW6VvcywFrc). The 1:42 minute video

starts with some text that explains Sunday Parkways, an event in Ferguson since 2009

when certain streets get shut down to traffic so that people can play and visit in the street,

much like a block party. The rest of the video shows a series of photographs, presumably

taken during Sunday Parkways events, that show people of all ages and races out playing

together. The whole video is set to a happy, up-beat song. The video was uploaded under

the name FergLove. The second video, produced by MSNBC, was a look back on the

unrest in Ferguson during August of 2014 through the lens of a Ferguson resident who

was interviewed then and was being re-interviewed for the video segment

(http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/watch/how-ferguson-has-changed-in-7-months-

414285891626). There were images from August of 2014, so the fear and uncertainty of

the period of time came through, but the man's message was ultimately one of hope and

rebuilding. The third resource we shared with students was the result of what happens

when you type the word Ferguson into Google images. Each and every image that was

immediately visible displayed protestors and police officers in tanks and military style

armor and cars or businesses burning. This imagery continued even as you scrolled down

the page. After we showed each web resource, we had the students spend a few minutes writing or drawing their response to the video. After we had shown all three, we engaged in discussion of what we saw and heard in the images/videos, and which, if any, accurately depicted the community the students call home.

After the video juxtaposition, we talked about the unit we were starting and the importance of students sharing their perspectives on their community. We brainstormed ways in which we could learn more about our community and came up with the following list: online research; ask for other people's opinions – talk to people we know who live in Ferguson, talk to our parents; read a book or article about Ferguson; take a walk and make observations. We decided to start our research by creating a survey to send out to other kids in Ferguson. In pairs, students thought of questions they would like to ask other kids about Ferguson. We then compiled their questions, eliminating any duplicates, and displayed the compiled questions back to the students on chart paper the following day. They were each given ten stickers that they used to "vote" for the questions they would like to see included on the survey. From there, we took the most popular questions and created a Google form that we sent to a handful of other district teachers (https://goo.gl/C84IpM). We received 40 responses from other students in grades 3rd through 6th, which we later analyzed together to search for common themes.

For the next several days while we were awaiting responses to our survey, we sought to help the students reconnect with a sense of writing craft and voice through the analysis of various mentor texts, both narrative and poetry, focused on home spaces. For example, we read *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant (1985) and examined how Rylant crafted the text in such a way that we could imagine being in the home with all the

relatives. We read poetry that looked closely as home spaces, such as "Comfortable Old

Chair" (Kuskin, 1992), "Under the Bed" (Scieszka, 1992), and "Grandmama's Kitchen

Table" (Rylant, 1992), and poetry that took a more broad look, such as *Mural on Second*

Avenue and Other City Poems (Moore, 2013) and *Uptown* (Collier, 2000). For each

piece, we read it aloud at least twice and asked the students to respond with writing

and/or drawing. We then looked at some craft moves that the authors used, such as

repetition, sensory details, metaphors, short sentences and long sentences, line breaks,

etc. After each day's mini-lesson, we asked the students to create a list of ideas that was

sparked by the writing and to begin writing poems or stories focused on home spaces.

During this time students also created memory maps of their homes and neighborhoods

which included place, people, and events that mean home to them.

Our next set of community mapping activities focused on documenting Ferguson

and home spaces through observation and the recording of fieldnotes. We were able to

purchase five inexpensive handheld video cameras through a grant from Educators for

Social Justice (http://www.educatorsforsocialjustice.org/). We checked these out to

students each night for them to use to take photos and videos of their home spaces. We

also introduced students to the basics of taking sketchnotes (e.g. Brown, 2014; Rohde,

2013) as a way for them to quickly document their observations when they didn't have

access to one of the video cameras. We practiced taking fieldnotes as we explored the

Ferguson city website (https://www.fergusoncity.com/) and documented our observations

of areas just outside of and adjacent to the school. After we had a healthy supply of

photos to choose from, we engaged students in photo writing, showing them how they

could create a snapshot with their words and consider the thoughts of people (or objects)

in the photos (Lane, 2003). This all culminated in a walking field trip to a nearby park. Along the way, we stopped several times to take photos, videos, and record our observations.

It just so happened that many students were interested in the election signs that were sprinkled all around, and they became a common thing for students to photograph. As a result, we were able to naturally introduce some aspects of city government (and the school board), while also drawing attention to the concept of representation. We learned about the Ferguson city council members and were able to point out how the council included three African Americans, one from each ward, who had been elected since the protesting following Michael Brown's death. This was also about the time when Ferguson hired its first African American police chief. With both instances, we tried to help the students to recognize that much awareness was raised around the racial make-up of the city government during the protests following Michael Brown's death, and that the changes may very well have been one result of that. These discussions also led very naturally to the concept of voting rights and the importance of voting as a way to voice your opinion and be active in civics. As a follow-up activity to further engage with civic aspects of the community, the students participated in a teacher-created "scavenger hunt" of the Ferguson website as well as that of a neighboring community where some of the children resided.

By the middle of April, most students had started several writing pieces focused on home. We wanted to provide them an outlet for publishing, and we also wanted to try to get families more involved in our community mapping unit. To do so we did two things. First, we looked at different ways of sharing others' stories. We listened to a

StoryCorp piece of a nine-year-old interviewing his dad

(https://storycorps.org/listen/albert-sykes-and-aidan-sykes-150320/). We also shared

some of the stories from *Humans of New York Stories* (Stanton, 2015), and talked about

how the words and images helped readers to get a glimpse of a person. From there, we

created a series of interview questions that students could ask a relative, close friend, or

neighbor and allowed students to again check out video cameras to bring home. The

second thing we did was to create a KidBlog page for students to post their writing, as

well as a code for parents and relatives to see the blog. Over the span of 10 days, I

received over 120 messages via KidBlog of student requests to publish either their

writing or to comment on another student's writing. Although neither KidBlog nor the

interview questions resulted in a strong family presence, it offered students another

possibility for exploring their home and community spaces. It also offered us an authentic

way to talk about the importance of revising and editing when you are publishing for an

authentic audience.

Toward the end of April, we began to focus more on the history of Ferguson, as

well as neighboring Kinloch. Our exploration started with the viewing of an 11-minute

Living St. Louis video that provided a brief history of Ferguson

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfJbYjWiPgQ). Every few minutes, we stopped the

video to provide students opportunity to write or draw in response to what they were

seeing and learning. After watching and discussing the video, we had students update

their KWL charts based on what they had learned so far about Ferguson. For many, the

video had brought to their attention some issues of race relations that they had not

previously been aware. For example, many students learned that Thomas January, one of

the city's earliest residents for whom a park is named, was a slave owner. They also learned that Ferguson was an all-white community known as a "sundown town" and that even through the 1970s the schools and communities in the area were segregated by race. This brought about many questions, so we invited the students to write letters to the folks who had been interviewed for the video to see if we could get them to come and talk to us. Of the four people we tried to contact, two of them came to the school to be interviewed—Joseph Wells, former mayor of Kinloch, and Gary Krump, owner of a local, family-owned meat market that had been in his family for generations. We also learned more about Kinloch's storied history through a book called, *Kinloch: Missouri's First All Black Town* (Wright, 2000).

As we moved into May, we not only had standardized testing to contend with, we also realized that we needed to get students thinking about a final product. We proposed to them the idea of creating videos to share our writing about Ferguson and our home spaces, complete with a film festival during the last week of school. We sent home invitations for the film festival and got to work helping students imagine possibilities for their creations. Part of this imagining work included a series of centers in which students examined and tried out different genres of writing that could be made into a video. As they rotated through the centers, the students were able to review the modes of writing and techniques that they had experienced earlier in the school year—narrative, poetry, informational, and opinion. They were exposed to various genres within each mode, including ABC books, list articles, raps, songs, spoken word poetry, digital poetry, digital narratives, and picture books, and prompted to consider the ways in which these texts were crafted by the authors.

After students had a chance to try some things out, they completed a pre-writing activity in which they articulated their idea for their video, as well as their purpose(s) for writing, the anticipated audience(s) who might view their video, and any details they wanted to be sure to include in their piece. We spent much time talking about how these videos would become artifacts of their perspective of Ferguson and how they had potential to be shown to an audience much larger than those who would be there for the film festival. We encouraged them to consider not only the message they wanted to communicate about Ferguson, but also what they wanted others to think about them as the producers of the media. Students were given the choice to work with a partner or on their own, and we were able to suggest some productive partnerships based on their pre-writing.

We spent many hours over the next three weeks helping students to draft and create their videos. Every student except one created a video to share at the film festival, and the students went through multiple cycles of revision to create them. During the week prior to the film festival, Sioux scoured second-hand stores and purchased several trophies that we modified to create the following film awards: Best of Show in Small Moments Stories; Best Use of Google Images; Best Use of Mixed Media; Best Use of Poetic Elements; Best of Show in Photo Essay; Most Inspiring; Best of Show in Poetry; Best Team Effort; Most Emotional; Best Script; Most Persuasive; Most Creative; Judges' Favorite; Most Powerful. Although not all families attended the film festival, all students received an award and were able to share their films with an authentic audience, including other third grade students in the school. Last-day-of-school exit interviews with students indicated that this had been a powerful experience for them.

This is My Ferguson!: Students (Re)Storying Home and Community

How, then, did students story their homes and communities? How did they use words and images to share their perspectives as residents of Ferguson and neighboring Dellwood? In this section, I explore those questions beginning with the students' homes and moving outward to their neighborhoods and the larger community of Ferguson. I draw on the writing and images produced by student participants during the community mapping unit, as well as the interviews that I conducted with students in December and January. Thus, the data from this chapter focuses primarily on the 13 students who were at Gregory Elementary throughout the school year, including the community mapping unit.

Home spaces. A majority of students lived in single-family homes with two parents or a parent and a step-parent. Out of 12 students for whom we collected this information, 11 lived in single-family houses and one lived in an apartment complex. The living situation for these 12 student participants had been relatively stable. Ten had been in school at Gregory since first grade or kindergarten, one started at the school at the beginning of second grade, and one started at the beginning of third grade. Eight of 12 lived in two-parent homes; three lived primarily with their mothers, but also spent time at their fathers' houses; and one spoke only of mom. Two of those in split-parent homes, as well as two in two-parent homes also lived with extended family members, including grandparents, aunties, and cousins.

Students illustrated their home spaces in a variety of ways. Two students, Noah and Montez, conducted a video tour of their homes, along with their ongoing narration of what the viewer was seeing. Others attended to photographing landscapes outside of their

houses. For example, Maya, Desean, and Zac all photographed the front of their houses,

Celso showed the view from his front porch, and Candice snapped multiple pictures

around her apartment complex, including the front of her building, the steps and walkway

leading to her door, her balcony, and the green space where she and her friends played

The objects that the students choose to capture told of their home spaces as well. They

used the cameras to share their gaming systems, video games, movies, shoes, and toys

with their classmates. Food and pets also peppered their online photo albums.

Through both words and images, students revealed special home spaces. They

spoke of shared bedrooms and had family members capture photographs of them doing

homework at the kitchen table. Lamar wrote about his "man cave" where he spent time

playing games, and Desean described the sunroom where he and his brothers could watch

TV in the morning, even sometimes with a special treat of donuts. For Zac, the backyard

was home "because on july we go to my back yard and we set off fireworks. And when

me and [friend] play hide and seek we play in the back yard." Tasha detailed the peace of

her basement, writing:

> My basement is my favorite place because I can read silent do things I want to do
>
> in peace. I can think straight when it is silent I do my homework down stairs and
>
> read for a hour or two if I want to read a extra hour I love peace because it don't
>
> distracting me because it's all silents. (from "Untitled Document 3")

Finally, some students took an even narrower view of home spaces. Jalisa, for example,

wrote of the comfort of her parents' bed, and Jasmine described the new-ish family couch

writing, "My couch is turning 1 years old really soon. i'm not having a party i'm just

going to sit on it a lot."

In storying their home spaces, family, both immediate and extended, was a topic that came up again and again in talk and text. For example, students wrote about cousins who were too numerous to count, those who played football, basketball, and joined them on holidays, as well as those whose lives had been cut tragically short. They spoke of BBQ at a TeTe's (aunt's) house, Christmas at Granny's, family reunions, and visits to faraway places. One student, Montez, was even an uncle. More often, though, it was their immediate family that captured their attention.

Mothers were a common theme across participants. For example, Desean, Lamar, and Corey all captured photos of themselves with their mothers when they took the video cameras home. Ayana described her mother as smelling like flowers, Jasmine wrote about a time that she and her mother went on a special "Girls Night Out," Montez listed in detail all the caretaking that his mom did for him when he was a baby, and Zac wrote the following about his mom:

> My mom is home because she cares about me because when i am sad she hugs me
>
> and cheers me up. And when i am good for the week she buys me a game. And
>
> when she makes my favorite food spaghetti it is deiousies and it good. (from a
>
> piece titled "Awsome")

Noah, too, had much to say about his mother when we spoke during his interview. Although he spent time at Dad's house every other weekend, Noah primarily lived with his mother. He seemed to take on the role of "man of the house." For example, consider the following interaction:

> **KO**:   What are some issues or topics that are important to you or that you care a lot about?
>
> **Noah**: Well apparently I care about my momma cuz my brother got kicked out. He never helped my mama. And sometimes he don't take me out places and

> sometimes he do, cuz sometimes, when he got a girlfriend, he mostly take care her, but not me and my momma.
>
> **KO**:   So your brother lived there for a while but doesn't live there anymore?
>
> **Noah**: Yeah.
>
> **KO**:   So he must be older than you, huh? So you care about your mom? You take care of your mom because your brother doesn't do much taking care of her? What do you do to take care of your mom?
>
> **Noah**: Open the doors. Help her clean up the house, help her cook, and take out the trash for her. And sometimes when she be sick, I help her out.
>
> **KO**:   I bet she appreciates that a lot. I bet she does.

Later in our interview, he brought up his mother again, telling me that he worried about her when he stayed with his dad. He said, "[When] I go to my dad's house, my mom all there alone. Sometimes I be thinking that she all there alone, I be thinking that she dead." Thus, we can see the responsibility he feels to care for and protect his mother, even though he is just nine years old.

Although the bonds that the students shared with their mothers certainly came across in words and images, many described or recorded interactions with their fathers too. Celso and Desean spoke of common interests such as football teams or video games for which they shared a passion with their fathers. Jalisa captured a series of videos of her and her father playing basketball together in the driveway when she brought the video-recorder home. During one video, the encouragement from her father is loud and clear as he records her shooting the basketball. "There you go. Show 'em how it's done," he says after her first made shot. "Can you get two in a row?" he challenges. After she knocks down the second shot, he again compliments and challenges her, "There we go. Let's get three in a row." In another video, Jalisa captures her father cooking dinner on the stove ("This is cabbage," she says. "Looks delicious doesn't it."). Desean and Noah also spoke of their fathers' cooking. Indeed, Noah said that his father was teaching him to cook.

Corey, too, spoke about intergenerational learning experiences with his dad. The excerpt below is from Corey's piece titled "My Dad is a Hard Worker":

> My dad is hard working because last summer he took me and my cousin Derrick to cut some grass the first time we cutted grass is when he said, "do you guys want to make some money" we said, "yes" so said, "go get the bike and go see if someone wants their grass cut" so we went all around the neighborhood asking people do they want their grass cut.

Corey finishes the story saying how he and his cousin made $25 each and how they went out the next day and cut more lawns. In addition to starting the lawn mowing business, Corey spoke of how he fixed and rode go-karts with his dad. In the photos he took at home, he included three that showed go-kart parts—a steering wheel, a frame, and an engine—in his garage.

With the exception of Zac, all participants had siblings, including half- and step-siblings, whom they spoke and wrote about from varied points of view. There were older brothers and sisters who annoyed them and who they annoyed in return, as well as those they looked up to. Collectively, they told stories of playing video games, basketball, football, kickball, tag and riding bikes with siblings. Many students captured photos and videos of their siblings. For example, Jasmine "spied" on her younger siblings with the video camera, and she introduced another video saying, "This is my baby brother. He is going to take his first steps." After he walked a few feet she said, "He did it! Walk to sissie." Jalisa, too, described caring for her baby brother. Consider the following excerpt from my interview with her:

> **Jalisa**: My mom's always telling me to watch him, because I'm like the most responsible one with him.

> **KO**: Yeah, I bet you're a big help to her. Do you have to change diapers?
>
> **Jalisa:** No. I just make bottles and I throw away the diapers and I watch him, and I wet his towels sometimes. I always get it perfect. I always get the perfect temperature.
>
> **KO**: For the towel, for what?
>
> **Jalisa:** To wipe his face off.
>
> **KO**: Oh, I see.

Here we see some of the ways in which big sister takes on some care taking responsibilities at home and the pride that she expresses in doing so.

It was not just Jalisa who relayed details about responsibilities at home. Ayana and Corey spoke of having to feed and walk the family dog. Corey also had to take out the trash. Maya captured pictures of her helping with dinner and ironing a pair of pants. Other students spoke more generally about helping at home. Candice, for example, included the following on a list of things she does at home: clean the house, do chores. However, in a later piece she described how the best laid plans don't always work out. She wrote:

> I live in ferguson and My mom and dad and brothers, sisters we always keep the house clean and we have fun at home and when we have fun we forget to keep the house clean And we mess it up. (from a piece titled "Home")

In just 41 short words, Candice captures how home spaces are also lived spaces.

Beyond the housekeeping responsibilities, ten of thirteen students either described or captured pictures of them doing homework. The practices of academic literacy did not stop with homework. Tasha, Noah, and Jalisa reported reading chapter books for enjoyment at home; Lamar and Montez spoke of writing poems; Corey had a writer's notebook that he used for story writing; and Jalisa and Zac both described secret diaries that they kept. Finally, many students expressed that their processes of learning to read

and write began at home. For example, Ayana, Noah, and Jalisa all talked about having a parent check out books from the public library and read to them, especially at bed time. They each credited this with helping them learn to read. Likewise, Montez and Lamar credited their parents with helping them learn to write, Montez through writing his name and Lamar through copying sentences that his mom gave him.

In describing out of school activities, gaming was a popular pastime for students. There was talk of game systems, such as PS4, Xbox, Nintendo DS, and games including Grand Theft Auto, Streetfighter, Black Ops III, and Mario Kart, as well as apps and games that they played on tablets and phones, such as Roblox and Angry Birds. They also talked about playing board games with family members, such as The Game of Life, Monopoly, Trouble, Uno and Phase 10, and watching TV and movies. Beyond these activities, students detailed out-of-school activities that took place in neighborhood and/or community spaces. Thus, I turn now to describe the ways in which students storied their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood spaces. In interviews, students described the activities in which they participate and the places where they go. Collectively, they spoke of neighborhoods where kids played outside—riding bikes; playing basketball, football, kickball, and tag; going to the park; and occasionally fighting with friends. However, it was the students' writing that offered vivid renderings of the sights and sounds that created the space of their neighborhoods. For example, Corey describes his process of learning to ride his bike on the sidewalks and streets of his neighborhood in his piece called "My Neighborhood":

A lot of people like to play basketball and make three pointers and ride their bikes with lights, pegs, off road tires. My neighborhood is my home because i've been

living in my house for four years and ever since I got a bike I was up every

morning riding my bike but when I was new to the neighborhood I just went up

and the sidewalk all the way to the house next to the house [friend] lived in then

turned back around the next year i went all the way up the street and back down

but that last year i start riding in the street that when I started learning how to burn

my tiers on the rocks or not

Focusing on the sounds of his neighborhood, Noah provided the following sensory details

in a piece where he was gathering potential ideas to include in the rap video he wanted to

produce for his final project:

bird chirping, cars driving on the road close to my house driving nicely, the radio

in my house listening to jazz playing football & basketball with my best friend

next door to me and we be making sounds in football & basketball like, 224 224

hit !!! and DOWN SIT HIT, and dribbling the ball (from piece called "Rapping

Ideas")

Maya's video for her final project combined words, images, photographs, and videos to

provide a glimpse of her street. (Maya's video can be viewed here:

https://goo.gl/w8PgpW.) However, her inspiration seemed to come from an earlier poem

she wrote titled "My Street."

> My street is

Full of peace
    And quiet not loud
When you pull up
    My shade up. you will
See a lot of people walking back
    And fourth.at my house I will
See every one up and happy
    And ask my mom can I go play outside

> With jayda and trinity
> > Then we get outside
> we dance and do gymnastics we play
> > With my double dutch rope
> that is fun.

Zac, too, painted a picture of his neighborhood with his words. In his final project, he took viewers through the four seasons, showing scenes from his home and community as he used voiceover to describe places and activities within each season. (Zac's video can be viewed here: https://goo.gl/RHhKJS.) His piece titled "All About Ferguson" begins like this:

> I live in Ferguson. On my street there is no violence. Even by my house there's no crime. All there is is just peace and quiet. And you can look in the sky all day and nothing will never happen. There is a park next to my house. There is a peaceful place at the park where you can enjoy the beautiful sky. And you enjoy the peace in the park. there is birds chirping and quietness. And there is trees. But you can have a lot of fun on the swings and the slides. And also you can go bike riding with your family.

In each of these pieces, the students provide detailed depictions of their neighborhood spaces; yet, the method they use to do so varies. Corey's piece and Noah's piece both "show, not tell" about a peaceful street and safe neighborhood. Corey's piece suggests a relatively safe area if he is able to ride his bike around the streets of the neighborhood. Moreover, because he describes progressively where he could ride and how far he could go, the reader can infer that there were some limits placed on his bike riding by a parent or older sibling. Likewise, Noah invites the reader into the sounds of his neighborhood so that we can almost imagine the jazz playing through window and the

sound of children playing. Zac, however, is more direct in countering the claims of a "dangerous" neighborhood, specifically stating that there is no violence or crime on his street. Maya seems to draw on both methods of showing and telling. She states that her street is "full of peace," but she also shows with her imagery of the girls playing double-dutch jump rope and doing gymnastics.

Although students painted a peaceful picture of their homes and communities, they also grappled with realistically storying their community as a place that had issues in need of fixing. For example, for his final video, Corey continued to attend to the built environment by creating a piece that critiqued the pothole filled streets near the school (Corey's video can be viewed here: https://goo.gl/Ma9VoC.) Students also wrote of dangerous roads with cars that sped. They wrote of bikes getting stolen, loud music that kept them up at night, and litter in the street. And they wrote of guns—those that they heard close to their house on New Year's Eve or Fourth of July and the one that took the life of a young girl their age from a neighboring city who was hit by a stray bullet while doing her homework in the fall of 2015. Even at their own school a gun had been discovered buried in the mulch on the playground earlier that year. They lived these realities, and at times, they struggled to provide a nuanced view of their home and community. Tasha's piece titled "My Story" captures these complexities:

> My neighborhood has a lot of kids a lot of trees and some shooting. It's very quite [quiet] at dark time sometimes it's car crashing and trees getting cut down and lot's of people cutting the grass. Sometimes you see people raking and drive by's. There too much yelling people falling and getting hurt it's quite [quiet] at dark but

it's still bad. You might see lighting bugs getting cought by people that love to

catch them.

Likewise, Ayana describes her neighborhood writing, "I am from my neighborhood

where there are gun stores, bells, school, pools and trees." Through the voices of these

children and the details they provide, we can see the paradoxes of living in these

neighborhood spaces. These paradoxes and their attempts to accurately depict both the

positives and the negatives increase the further removed their writing gets from the

concrete details of their homes and neighborhoods. In the next section, I continue to

move outward as I use students' text, talk, and images to story the broader community of

Ferguson.

Ferguson. For many students, their understandings of Ferguson started well-

before August of 2014 with personal experiences in community centers and other places

in the community. Thus, I begin with those aspects of community spaces that are more

experiential for students, building progressively outward to into the more abstract space

of Ferguson as a national symbol of police violence, civil unrest, and #BlackLivesMatter.

It is also worth noting that when speaking of the wider community spaces, at times

students may be referring to places in Ferguson and at other times they may be

referencing places in neighboring Dellwood. Students who attend Gregory Elementary

lived in both communities and both were sites of civic unrest; yet Ferguson is the one that

became known nationwide due to the fact that the police officer who shot and killed

Michael Brown was with the Ferguson Police Department.

Community spaces. When writing and talking about home and community,

students told of places outside of their immediate homes and neighborhoods that were

sites of interest and activity for them. For example, several students played on sports

teams in and around Ferguson. In addition, many described experiences with attending

community churches. For example, Zac described church as home in one of his pieces.

Likewise, Noah detailed singing in the children's choir at church during our interview.

For Corey, church was more than just a place of worship; it had also been his daycare

prior to entering school. Other students also spoke of various settings where they went

after school, as well as camps over the summer. One place that came up multiple times

was the Boys and Girls Club. Both Lamar and Noah went there after school until their

mothers got off work. Places of business, particularly stores where they purchased clothes

and household items, were also mentioned frequently by students. These included

Walgreens, Target, Walmart, Foot Locker, GameStop, and Goodwill.

The built environment was what captured the attention of students when we went

on walking field trips. During our forays beyond the school yard, they were able to

photograph and write fieldnotes on community places, spaces, and objects. These

concrete artifacts and their direct experiences facilitated their writing about such spaces.

For example, we asked students to write from a photo that the class had captured while

out and about. Noah chose a photo of a house across the street from the school that was a

familiar sight for the students, not only because of its proximity to the school (it was

visible from the classroom windows), but also because it had been photographed multiple

times by various students. He described the house, writing:

> A Beautiful house with a fresh low cut lawn the sidewalk was long with two nice
>
> tall trimmed bushes. The house has six windows three on the left side and three on
>
> right side and the windows have blinds so nobody won't look in the house. The

> back roof is the house roof the small one is where the outside of the doorway is. The garage is at the back of the house and the garage is small. (from piece titled "Snapshot")

Other students, including Desean and Montez, focused their attention on places of business. Desean, for example, used some of the same descriptive techniques as Noah when describing a market near the school, but he built on his description with his personal experiences of shopping there. He writes:

> I saw my favorite store called [market]. Like if someone was to find it I could say that it's all white made of brick. And it's one meduim window and you could see racks with candy and stuff on it. And a strait roof. That is all things you could say if someone was triying to find [market]. I go there almost every single day to know all those things. I just go there to get candy. Sometimes food or drinks. (from piece titled "My Snapshot and Thoughtshot")

Montez, however, took a different approach when writing about a gas station we passed by on our walks. He seemed to draw on what he saw the day we were there, but he also imagined what people might be doing at the store. He writes:

> Soon people are walking out with Milk, cookies, soda and chips and then ice cream fruit hot dogs chicken and everything else they must of shopped good I guess people were putting gas in there cars and vroom vroom zoom! They were off speeding they went super fast like a half motorcycle half car soon [the gas station] was about to be empty because there were no more cars or customers soon before they went on break more cars zoomed onto the parking lot and ran

into the store fast like the store was about to close. (from piece titled "Fieldnote

Writing")

Much of students' writing about the places and spaces they frequented in and around

Ferguson revealed it to be a town much like any other with churches, daycares, gas

stations, and markets. Yet, those same paradoxes that had accompanied their writing

about the problems in their neighborhood also appeared more frequently in the writing

they did about symbolic "Ferguson."

“The Mike Brown situation”. During one of our walking tours, we stopped and

spent some time writing and recording in front of a small shopping center that had been

destroyed following Michael Brown's death. The built environment, or more specifically

those buildings that had been destroyed, provided a concrete way for students to write

about and comment on what they variably defined as the "Michael Brown incident"

(Maya), the "Mike Brown stuff" (Corey), the "riots" (Noah), the "Mike Brown thing"

(Jalisa), the "Michael Brown situation" (Tasha), and the "night someone died" (Lamar).

For example, Ayana focused on sensory details in describing one of the buildings as it

now looked. She wrote:

> I went over there one more time to see the building. And the roof is breaking off.
>
> And the bricks are breaking and in a little while it won't be a wall no more. I saw
>
> the sign on the ground. I saw the light bulb on the floor in the burned down
>
> building. (from piece titled "Burned Down Places").

Desean, too, wrote about one of the destroyed buildings; however, this excerpt is more

focused on his thoughts and experiences:

I always pass that burned down building. And most people think that the people

that work on buildings is going to get it up, or do something with it. That's

everyone's wishes. I think about all the memories when I was there in that place

when it use to be crowded and full. (from piece titled "My Picture Writing")

Finally, Tasha also had much to say about one of the businesses that had been destroyed.

Like Desean, she imagined what it could be. In her piece titled "Picture Writing," she

wrote:

 I chose this picture because how it look and maybe can fix it and put the beauty

supply house so people can still go to it in shop for there hair makeup lip gloss

barrettes bobby pins I always went to that shop before they burned it all the way

down.

With their words, the students are able to relay their past experiences as patrons, the

present circumstances, and their ideas for what the future might hold.

Other students also created contrasts with their writing by storying before the

"Mike Brown incident" and after. Maya, for example, recalled a conversation between

her and her mother, writing, "last week my mom said to me that it was really peaceful

back in the day." Although what she means by "back in the day" is left undefined and she

offers no details to help the reader understand "peaceful," the implied contrast is obvious.

Likewise, Jasmine commented on the state of present-day Ferguson, writing, "Ferguson

you'd [used] to be special now ferguson is a wire [war]. Can anyone fix ferguson."

Likely drawing on images from events during the summer and fall of 2014, she compares

Ferguson to a war; however, she also leaves out details about what made Ferguson

"special" in the past. Lamar, on the other hand, provides many details in describing Ferguson "now" and "then." The following is his piece titled "My Home 3":

> Ferguson is like heaven when I came here. Ferguson is like a nice breeze in the wind not a single bad thing. Ferguson is like [Gregory Elementary] the best school. In till one night someone died then everthing went wrong people burning stuff down. I just wanted to say stop out loud. Ferguson was like were we lived was about to be destroyd it was fire every where bouldings where on fire. People where getting hurt. Our police where trying to stop it and the fire duportmet where to. but they stopped for a day. And it was the same the next day we could not go to school for like 3 our 4 days. Then they stop I thought it would be like that the next day but guess what! We finally got to go to school woo hoo!!

In each of these pieces, the students engage with the reality of the chaos that took place in their community; however, we can also see in these pieces that they have a more difficult time describing what made the community "peaceful" or "special" or "like a nice breeze in the wind." That is, the farther they got from the concrete details of their homes and neighborhoods, the more general their renderings of the community were. Lamar, however, drew on memories of either personal experiences or media viewing during the time of unrest, which allowed him to vividly describe the circumstances of what happened after "the night someone died."

Memories and personal experiences during the days following the shooting of Michael Brown appeared in the talk and text of two other students as well. Noah, for example, again used sensory details to provide details of his experiences. He wrote, "I'm hearing police sirens and helicopters flying. Hearing gunshots and speeding cars and

police sirens and it's on the news too." It was Ayana, however, who relayed the most

intimate experience to me during our interview. Prior to the excerpt I share below, I

asked Ayana if she thought kids could change the world. She responded yes, and when I

asked how, she brought up "the Mike Brown stuff." Apparently, misunderstanding my

question to be asking about what she, as a child, would like to see changed, she suggested

that "the police could've just took them to jail." She elaborated saying, "They [the police]

could've accidentally shot someone with their shooting." In my attempts to get her to

clarify, I realized she was commenting that the police could have also shot another

person—one who was not being questioned or stopped—so they should have just taken

Michael Brown to jail, rather than firing guns. This conversation opened up the

opportunity to inquire further about her thoughts on the aftermath of the Michael Brown

shooting. Below is an excerpt of our conversation:

> **KO**: What do you remember about when that all happened?
>
> **Ayana**: My house was on TV. They was on my street.
>
> **KO**: Who was?
>
> **A**: The people that was shooting, the stuff from when Mike Brown got killed.
>
> **KO**: So the people that were protesting, or the police officers?
>
> **A**: The people that were protesting.
>
> **KO**: They were on your street?
>
> **A**: Yeah, it was like in the middle of the street, just yelling and shooting.
>
> **KO**: I bet that was scary.
>
> **A**: Like outside of the gas station, because I live by the gas station.
>
> **KO**: How did you feel when that was going on?
>
> **A**: I just stayed in my mom's room.
>
> **KO**: What about your brother and sister, did they stay in your mom's room too?
>
> **A**: My sister didn't care. My brother, he just kept on looking out the window, asking my mom to tell them to stop.
>
> **KO**: Were you scared?

> **A**:   Yes. I thought they was gonna shoot our house.
>
> **KO**:   Did mom and dad make you feel better though?
>
> **A**:   Yeah.
>
> **KO**:   Yeah, that's scary stuff.

Unlike some of the other students who may have been further removed, Ayana revealed how close the "Mike Brown stuff" was to her home and her life. Like Lamar and Noah, she relates disturbing details and expresses her fear and desire to have it all stop. Ayana's willingness to engage with her memories and experiences, as well as her growing confidence in her voice as a writer were displayed in her final video as well, a point that will be explored in the case study of Ayana that concludes this chapter.

   Confronting perceptions and designing possible futures. In many ways, the students took up the challenge that Sioux and I presented them with. From early on in the community mapping unit, we positioned students as placemakers. We conveyed that they could story Ferguson with their writing, providing a different image of their community than the media portrayal of the area in the weeks and months following the shooting of Michael Brown.

   Perhaps seeing themselves as uniquely positioned to provide such perspective, many students directly confronted presumed perceptions of Ferguson by outsiders. For example, Maya referred generally to "people" as collective, writing, "People think Ferguson is bad because of the Michael Brown incident and all the protesting. However, the Ferguson I know is a good, peaceful place." She positions herself as an insider who knows the community, as opposed to the undefined others who only have a limited understanding of Ferguson as national symbol. Corey more directly speaks to the reader through use of the pronoun "you." He writes:

> Ferguson is really not what you think it is it's really a good place every since the
> Mike Brown stuff started people start protesting but people they are done with all
> the shooting and robberies now Ferguson is just a busy peaceful place. You would
> want to live here because there nice people here. (from piece titled "All About
> Ferguson")

Like Maya, Corey draws a contrast between himself, a person of authority, and someone
who may not know the "real" Ferguson. Yet, both Maya and Corey seem to realize that
they cannot just leave out the "Mike Brown stuff" and pretend it never happened. In
confronting the reality of the events that took place in their community, they conflate the
peaceful protests with the criminal activities. Thus, they position the acts of civil
disobedience that erupted in response to long-standing racist policies and practices as
something someone might perceive as "bad."

Jalisa also attempts to persuade others that Ferguson is a good place to live. Her
piece titled "Draft 1" begins like this:

> Have you heard about the Mike Brown incident? I get how you might think
> Ferguson is a terrible place because of that and all the violence. But that's your
> point of view, other people might think differently. Like me. If you think
> Ferguson is violent that's your opinion but this might change your mind.

Like Corey and Maya, Jalisa speaks directly to the reader in the introduction and
positions herself as one who thinks differently. She then explicitly states her persuasive
purpose. She begins the first body paragraph writing, "Ferguson is quiet now, this isn't
the real Ferguson you saw when the Mike Brown thing happened, NO! Ferguson is
different it's the perfect place to live." With this quote, she seems to be falling into the

same trap of painting the "Mike Brown thing" in a completely negative light, failing to

attend to the acts of civil disobedience. However, in a later paragraph she deals with the

complexities of the situation. She writes:

> Ferguson has high security, I know police officers have been going the wrong
>
> way, but hey they can change! But they still get the job done. And I know people
>
> have been killing each other and burning places down, But people can change!
>
> But they still get taken care of. Everyone can change!

Here she takes on both the police officers who "have been going the wrong way" and the

people who have been "killing each other and burning places down." With the innocence

of a child, she reveals her understanding of the multiple perspectives and issues that led

to the "Mike Brown incident." She also expresses her belief in the capacity of people to

change. This is a theme that continues later in the piece as well. She writes:

> Things are getting better in Ferguson because there are less problems ever since
>
> Mike Brown died. We are fixing Ferguson, Ferguson has problems but so does
>
> other places, it's ok! People have problems too! It's natural!

In this excerpt, she draws attention to the ways in which "we are fixing Ferguson." Thus,

she positions herself as a fixer through the use of the pronoun "we." However, she also

stories Ferguson as a place that is not all that unique when she comments that other

places have problems too, and that "it's ok" and "it's natural." On the one hand, this can

be read as legitimizing the status quo by making problems such as police brutality and

violence seem normal and natural. However, when read against her call to action in later

sections, we see a young lady who believes in the power of positive change. She

concludes her piece with the following, "If we work together we can make Ferguson and

the world a better place….We can make a difference in Ferguson, we can make a difference in our lives." This piece fed into the final video that Jalisa created with Alessandra. Their video can best be described as a commercial for Ferguson and was created based off a script they co-wrote. In it, they continue to deal with the complexities of what happened and they offer specific suggestions for how Ferguson can be improved. (Jalisa and Alessandra's video can be viewed here: https://goo.gl/O9sBGt.)

Through Jalisa's writing, we see someone who not only imagines a different possible future, but also uses her words and her writing to call for action. Similar themes came across in Noah's writing as well. He produced a rap video for his final project titled "Stop the Violence in Ferguson." From the title alone we can see a call for action. Like Jalisa, he addresses issues with the police in the community; however, he does so in a more critical way through both image and words. In the beginning of the video, there are two back-to-back images of protestors. The first is a photograph of about 15 people, mostly young, black males, standing in the street with their hands in the air. The second shows hundreds of people marching, holding signs. The words that accompany these images are, "I'm walking down the street / And Protesting, shouting for justice and peace." Through the juxtaposition of both words and images, Noah positions himself in solidarity with the peaceful protestors. In the next part of the video, he narrates the police response to the protests. The images show police in riot gear, complete with military-style guns, shields, and gas masks. Although he spends several lines rapping about this, the following couplet gets to the heart of the matter: "Running from the 5-0 I need to go / Sometimes friends and sometimes foes." Here he positions the police as being both

helpful and harmful at times, depending on the situation. Noah's rap video ends with the

following seven couplets:

> In Ferguson we need more peace
> Not harassing and unfair police
>
> The buildings that got burned down
> It looks like Ferguson is a ghost-town
>
> AND GUESS WHAT FERGUSON!!! WE NEED SOME PEACE
> We need some justice WITH THE POLICE!!!
>
> We need some new shops to take the place
> Of the old ones that got displaced
>
> We need people to stop buying drugs
> From gang-bangin' drug-addicted thugs
>
> People need to stop demeanin' the cops
> So the killing of people for no reason stops
>
> We need to stop the violence and get more peace
> So the heartbreak and tears can decrease.

With this ending, he illustrates a different possible future and outlines his calls for action,

but he does so in a way that addresses varied perspectives. (Noah's video can be seen

here: https://goo.gl/NiJrxq.)

The students in the classroom and the designs that they produced give me hope.

Thus, I want to end this section by sharing Desean's calls for action. For his final video,

Desean created an ABC Book of Ferguson. His video titled "C is for Community" won

the class film festival award for "Most Inspiring" because of the messages of hope, peace,

non-violence, and solidarity he conveyed. (Desean's video can be viewed here:

https://goo.gl/Hd6KtO.) In many ways, Desean's writing invokes the image of a preacher

at the pulpit during Sunday morning church. He writes:

I grew up in Ferguson and if you don't love then you don't have anything to love. The enemy is fear. We think it's hate; but it's fear. We need to start to make this the best community ever we have artist spray painting art to inspire people. If we don't inspire then we need to admire and be like the other artist and do art like me I'm a artist. A very good one to. I want a better community and I know you do to so let's make a great community for everyone.

In this quote, Desean seems to be channeling Martin Luther King, Jr. We not only see a child who imagines a different possible future, but also one who believes in the power of his voice. In the next section, I take a close look at Anaya's writing journey throughout the year to show the ways in which she, too, became empowered to share her voice through the emotional video that she produced for our final film festival.

Ayana: Finding her Voice

Ayana was a shy, reserved student during class, rarely volunteering answers or opinions. Even in one-on-one or small group situations, Ayana spoke so softly it was sometimes hard to hear her, and she often would not make direct eye contact when she spoke. At recess, however, Ayana came alive during pick-up basketball games. Every day she would be over by the hoops, often the only girl, jostling for position, taking shots, and rebounding with the best of them. Although she was not afraid to speak up on the court to voice her interpretation of the rules, she mostly let her game speak for itself. Sometimes the post-game bravado and confidence would return with her to the classroom, but often Ayana's body language was the only clue to what she was thinking.

During the poetry unit, I had the opportunity to conference with Ayana on a regular basis. In one of our early conversations I was talking to Ayana about her "I Am

From" poem, pointing to lines that I thought were beautiful and verbalizing the effect the

poem was having on me. I was rewarded with full eye contact and a smile that lit up her

whole face. In that moment she let me in, she let me see her, for just a second. As soon as

she realized that others at her table were witnessing this conversation, their eyes focused

on us, her eyes became hooded again, the smile disappeared, and she retreated back to the

privacy of her thoughts.

During future conversations, I continued to encourage her and she seemed to take

to poetry. Like many other students, Ayana wrote about things that were important to her

including playing basketball and a delicious cake that her granny makes. She played with

poetic techniques including personification, figurative, language, repetition, and

purposeful use of white space. Moreover, poetry gave her a vehicle to begin expressing

her authentic voice. For example, in the last lines of "Eating Pie" she writes:

> Sometimes
> she let us get
> another piece of cake or some
> more cookies.
> It be so good. I love the
> cake the most. It be so good.

This short excerpt shows Ayana's experimentation with line breaks and repetition as she

writes about something near and dear to her. It also shows her use of her home language,

African American Vernacular English with "sometimes she let us" and "it be so good."

Traces of this authentic voice and her experimentation with owning a writerly

identity showed up in bits and pieces in other pieces and units. For example, in a piece

called "All About Mom" Ayana wanted to convince people to appreciate her mom. In

one excerpt from the piece, she wrote:

> And she will always keep her mind on people and animals. And she shall never
>
> hate them in her life. And she always keep a promise and she will never break her
>
> promise. And she shall never forget nothing you told her from when she was a
>
> kid.

Here she developed a rhythm with the "she will always" and the "she shall never" lines in the writing. Moreover, because the word "shall" is not drawn from Ayana's speaking vocabulary, she appears to want to sound more ceremonial or formal in her recognition of her mother. In another piece titled "School," Ayana started the piece by drawing on a poetic technique we learned during the poetry unit—figurative language. She writes, "I like school like I like my dog. But my dog can't teach me anything and help me learn like school can." Here again, she took some risks as she experimented with how she can effectively use her writing voice to get her point across.

Although the lines above are those that made the cut into a final draft, I discovered many more instances of experimentation and risk-taking when I reviewed the revision history of Anaya's pieces in Google Docs. For example, the students were tasked with writing about something they would like to see changed in the school or community. Anaya's initial writing around this topic started like this:

> I think we should be more careful of what we do. Like being more careing about
>
> people even if they are a stranger to you. Or like being more cheerful to everyone
>
> when they are sad or when they are mad at someone eles.

In this early writing, she exposed a sensitive side of herself and gave a glimpse into her innermost thoughts. However, this writing was later deleted from the page.

On her second pass at this task, Ayana moved on to a more practical topic. She wrote about why she thinks there should be two recesses a day. Her draft started like this: "I think we should have two recesses a day. The playground is a wonderful place to play, talk and laugh with your friends." After spending a few lines talking about the importance of the "Friday special" extra recess time they get on the playground each week, Ayana's writing took on an inspirational tone. She wrote, "And the outside it were every kid is supposed to be outside. And that is were we can have our freedom and our destiny to see the outside of the school and see the playground and play with our friends." Again, Ayana attempted to tackle big topics such as freedom and destiny within the confines of a school day. However, the next day, as with before, this line was cut. She continued writing about the need for two recesses, but did so in a way that was sanitized, scrubbed of any emotion.

Even these false starts, however, seemed to be hinting toward Ayana's willingness to let herself be seen through her writing. Her piece "The Burned Down Places" was an emotional piece about the devastation in Ferguson that she began writing the day after we had been on a walking field trip. As the revision history shows, however, this powerful piece almost ended up on the cutting room floor as well. The task given to students was to choose a picture from our walking field trip and write about the picture. Ayana's first pass at this assignment was to paste a picture of a local laundromat into her document. She then removed it, substituting a picture of a well-manicured house across the street from school. Then she deleted that and added a picture of some election signs with the sentence, "I wish I can vote." Later, in the afternoon, she axed the election picture and the words, replacing them with a photo of a burned down nail shop. For the

rest of the writing period, she wrote to that photo. She continued adding to her piece for approximately 20 minutes the next morning. At the end of the period, however, she erased everything she had written, leaving just a blank page. The next day, she restored her previous work and continued working on it. She then deleted the entire piece again in the afternoon before restoring it five minutes later.

Her initial photo choices suggest that Anaya may have been trying to choose a benign photo, yet those photos didn't spark any writing. When she finally settled on the burned down nail shop, she found much to say, but then her hesitation with this topic was evident in the fact that she deleted the entire piece twice before restoring it to continue working on it. When I first read her piece, I honored her voice and the emotion she conveyed and I again was rewarded with a shy smile. I helped her to reorganize some of the sentences for clarity and flow. By the end of our conversation she was glowing with pride. Later, when Sioux got wind of her piece, she too lavished praise on Ayana.

Despite our genuine praise, Ayana hesitated to select this writing when we asked students to envision a piece that they would turn into a video for our culminating Room 21 Film Festival. She chose instead to start an ABC book of Ferguson, opting for a safer choice, one that wouldn't expose any of her internal thoughts and feelings. Indeed, in her draft of her ABC book she wrote in the most general terms about community, describing Ferguson as dark, exciting, fun, good, happy (for letters D, E, F, G, & H respectively). She also distanced herself with her use of pronouns. Only two times in the piece does she refer to "my" community. All other instances are "your" community or "their" community. It is as if she wants to avoid any hint of emotional attachment to the

community, possibly because of the frightening experiences and memories she has from the days following the shooting of Michael Brown.

Eventually, with much encouragement from Sioux and me, Ayana settled on "The Burned Down Places" as the piece that she would revise and produce for the final video. The result was nothing short of amazing. After a brief title frame, the piece starts Ayana's text narrating how she used to go to the nail salon with her mom. This is paired with a picture of people in a nail salon getting their nails done. On the next frame, a picture of a bunch of burning trash and furniture in the street is paired with her explanation of how she can't go back to the nail salon because "it got burned down by other people for the Mike Brown stuff that happened." The next frame shows an after picture of the nail salon, taken the day of our walking field trip, and Ayana's vivid description of the building's current state of disrepair. Continuing to the next frame, there is a picture of a burned Auto Zone with text that begins, "I wish all that stuff that had happened never did." The final frame includes the following lines of text, "I wish all the protesting will stop going on. I wish people didn't have a reason to protest. I have dreams about that place and sometimes I wish that none of this stuff happened. I have lots of dreams." The text is paired with a picture of a painted piece of plywood that covered a store window in Ferguson during the unrest. The painting shows a blue sky with a sun and some flowers as well as a peace sign and handprints. It reads "Peace for Ferguson." A slow piano score that sets the emotional tone of the piece plays throughout Ayana's entire video. (Ayana's video can be seen here: https://goo.gl/lbyJCv).

Although Ayana shielded her face from view when her video was played for her classmates, the glow of her smile could still be seen as this high-risk, high-reward

emotional piece of writing earned a roar of applause from her classmates. Through this writing opportunity, she honored her authentic voice and shared an unseen side of herself with her classmates.

(Re)Storying Ferguson

Ayana's journey through the school year evidences her growing confidence in her writing voice. Indeed, throughout this chapter, I endeavored to amplify the voices of the students. In choosing which excerpts to include and how to organize them I have no doubt also interpreted their messages; however, I included talk and text from across participants to illustrate the varied ways in which students storied their home, neighborhood, community spaces, as well as the ways in which students tried to make sense of Ferguson as a symbol. Along the way, I hope that the students' texts have served as a counter story to the negative media portrayal of Ferguson and Mr. Trump's claims that it is "among the most dangerous in the world." Moreover, I hope it has provided a portrait of rich literate school and home environments, as well as illuminated the quality and sophistication of writing that students can produce when asked to write about and from places of the heart.

Chapter Seven – Discussion

In chapter one, I described the ways in which this study came about and the

rationale for engaging in pedagogy focused on critical literacy as placemaking. At the

time that Sioux and I were designing this study, we had no idea how our pedagogical

intent might be realized, and as I have tried to demonstrate in chapters four and five, there

were both successes and challenges. The purpose of this final chapter is to more fully

elucidate the data presented, making connections across chapters and theoretical

frameworks, and to consider methodological limitations, implications, and directions for

future research. Prior to this final and forward-leaning exploration, however, I would like

to momentarily return to the beginning, back to when the school year was brand new and

full of possibility. In the first and only "formal" interview that I conducted with Sioux in

early September, I asked her to articulate her reasoning for embarking on this action

research journey.

> **KO**:   Why did you decide to do this research study with me?
>
> **SR**:   For one, most teachers are not reflective, we don't have the time. We don't have the necessity, we're not forced to do it. You can really get some gems…I mean you can unearth some interesting things if you're reflective. So that's intriguing. It's intriguing to take something that I really am not happy with, and try to make it into something that I am happy with, and that, I think, will connect with the students. So that's a pull. It's nice to have another adult in the room, that's always, well I won't say it's always nice, but it's nice in this case.
>
> **KO**:   So thinking more about kind of the curriculum aspect, why do you think it's important for kids to write about place? Talk to me a little bit more about what your thoughts are around the curriculum we're looking at and how we're going to try and shape it. Why did you want to do that part of it? What do you think is important about that part of it?
>
> **SR**:   I think kids have to figure out, they have to kind of mentally, emotionally map out their home, their surroundings, that help form them. If they can get a grasp on okay, this is where I'm going, this is where I'm living, this is how it's impacting me, it will help them with their choices. It will help them as they develop, as they grow up. If they don't take that time to, you know, if they're just

kind of speeding through life and not really looking at, you know, the community, the neighborhood, the street, their neighbors, their family, it's not going to, I want to say it's not going to make sense and that's not the case, but…

KO: You're sort of eluding to the idea of identity, and just recognizing that these things help form…

SR: Who they are, who they're going to become. And also, they have a voice in that neighborhood, in that community, and if they're not being, if they're not conscious of what's going on, if they're not conscious of what their neighborhood is like and what their home is like, and what their city is like and what their country is like, they're not going to feel empowered. They're not going to say I have the right to speak up, I have the right to express my opinion, I have the right to tell my story. They need that empowerment, because at some point they're going to be the adult, they're going to be the ones voting, and running for alderman, and making some decisions. They need to feel empowered.

KO: When I was working for the proposal piece of this, one thing that came up, more than once really I think is the idea that you know, we have a focus on social action here, especially in the third unit, but thinking about the idea of social action. The question that was given to me was, not necessarily *Do you really think students can make a difference?*, but *What sort of outcomes can students impact?* And I think it was kind of a devil's advocate type of a question, but you know, do you see this making a real difference in the community? Can you fathom this making a difference? Do you know what I mean? Do you know the question I'm getting at here? I mean maybe, I don't know, talk to me about what you think about the social action piece of this. I don't think we're going to change anybody's material living situation, or make any life, and maybe I'm shooting short. What do you think? This is something I've been sort of grappling with is this idea of saying to kids, what you have to say matters and it's important, and then they go say what they have to say, and what if nobody listens?

SR: Well, I think we have to for sure, we have to build in, me and you have talked about the open mic night. Years ago, and it's been a number of years since we did it, we used to have an author's tea where the kids would share their stories and they would sit in a chair and guests—it might be board people and family members would come—and they'd see an author sitting there, and if there wasn't anyone in the chair next to the author, they'd sit down and the author would read their story, and then he'd go and listen to another story. We have to build in opportunities for them to share their story. I've seen where people have some preconceived ideas of, they look at a kid and they think they know what they're going to get out of that kid when they present their writing, and they're blown away. So I think part of it's going to be this little invisible trickle that it's not going to be able to be measured, but I think when kids share their stories, it can

change other people's minds. They can see, wow, that's a little kid, that's a little black kid and they wrote that.

KO: So maybe it's not necessarily making, sometimes a large-scale change, but changing people's minds and maybe changing the student's own mind about who they are.

SR: Right.

KO: Yeah, I like that, I like that a lot.

Although it may not be customary to present new data in a discussion chapter, I share the interaction excerpted above for a few reasons. First, I want to bring Sioux's voice back into conversation with my own to more fully highlight Sioux's professional identity as a teacher-researcher. Although the overall study was collaboratively designed and enacted, this dissertation has been authored by me alone. Thus, at times it reads more like an ethnography than an action research study. This is a point I return to later. Second, I believe this interaction between Sioux and me not only provided direction for the work we did during the school year, but it also illuminates many salient themes—place, voice, identity, agency, professionalism—so it serves to set the tone for this concluding chapter.

Shaping Literate Spaces

Spatial theorists contend that space plays a role in shaping cultural, social, and political life (Massey, 2005; Soja, 1996). That is, space matters. It is not just an empty canvas upon which history is written. Within social spaces, human beings with different culturally patterned histories of action (habitus) form and perform who they are (identity), and they are constituted in particular ways (subjectivity) in accordance with the discourses and activities within space (Bourdieu, 1977; Holland et al., 1998; Massey, 2005). Yet, space is open and constantly being shaped through the practices and interactions of social actors. Thus, it can be reshaped and redesigned in the interest of equity and social justice (Massey, 2005; Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995; Soja, 2010).

One of the focal inquiries of this research study was to understand the ways in which school spaces provided affordances and constraints to our enactment of placemaking as critical literacy, as well as students' development of critical consciousness. To this end, chapter four honed in on the classroom space, attending closely to how it was shaped by the school culture and routine practices, as well as how teachers and students used agentic means to reshape the classroom space. I illuminated the ways in which the ideological forces associated with discourses of accountability operated within and beyond the imagined boundaries of our classroom and the profound impact that they had on how the curriculum was designed and enacted. In so doing, I traced the ways in which the authority of "the test" came to be embodied by students and teachers through disciplinary power, such as regulation and surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Thus, I turn now to reflect on how institutional authority circulated to and through this schooled space.

Circulations of Power. Defining the boundaries of a material and social space such as a classroom can prove difficult when the fluidity of such boundaries is shaped by the mediated action of social actors and cultural artifacts across spaces. Thus, it becomes necessary to consider issues of scale—global, state, regional, and communal—as processes of globalization result in flows of capital, goods, people, culture, and information across borders and boundaries (Kostogriz, 2006; Vadeboncoeur, Hirst, & Kostogriz, 2006). How do the discourses of accountability circulate so that they came to have such an impact on the daily workings of our classroom? And it what ways do they intersect with larger social issues?

In chapter four, I argued that students had become resemiotized into test scores through discourses of "making student growth in performance" that were widely circulated by the principal and accepted as true by Sioux and her colleagues. To understand this, however, we need to understand why the test scores were so important. This requires an examination of national and state policies that impact the functioning of school districts and hence schools and classrooms. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was originally signed into law in 1965 by President Johnson to as part of the War on Poverty. Its goal was to provide federal educational funding (under Title 1) to states to ensure that all students, regardless of income levels, had access to quality public education (Gamson, McDermitt, & Reed, 2015). Although the law saw various changes over the years, a 1994 reauthorization required standards-based reforms as a requirement to receive Title 1 funding, and the 2002 reauthorization (No Child Left Behind-NCLB) added standardized testing requirements paired with state sanctions for those schools not making adequate yearly progress (DeBray & Blankenship, 2016). Although the most recent reauthorization of the bill in 2015 (Every Student Succeeds Act) has done much to roll back the federal overreach of the law, Gamson et al. (2015) claim that the origins of the polices can be obscured such that "it is often unclear whether a particular mandate comes from federal law, state law, or local interpretations of federal and state requirements" (p. 2). Thus, we can see the culture of accountability at Gregory Elementary and its impacts on our classroom teaching has its roots in state and national policies.

The evolution of ESEA has led the naturalization of a "standardized test-and-punish regime," which has opened the door to neoliberal market-based policies disguised

in discourses of school choice (Ayers & Ayers, 2011, p. 2). Despite the fact that the

neoliberal reform efforts of the last three decades have endeavored identify and "fix"

failing schools, scores from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) showed a decline in math and reading at all grade levels (DeBray &

Blankenship, 2016). This has served to further the narrative of "failing public scores"

while continuing to ignore structural and systematic issues related to poverty and racism.

In chapter five, I outlined historical patterns of racism embedded in national and local

policies and practices, as well as the banking and real estate industries. These are

responsible for the current patterns of residential segregation in the St. Louis area and the

shifting demographics in Ferguson. Because St. Louis' communities are largely

segregated by race and social class, so too are its school districts. Finnegan, Holme, &

Sanchez (2016) argue that regional patterns of school segregation are, in fact, the

underlying cause of school failure. They draw on Soja's (2010) concept of spatial

causality, which argues that patterns of racial and economic isolation reproduce

inequality, as a way to illuminate how "differential situations are no accident, but rather

the result of intentional policies and practices including school district boundaries, that

serve to reinforce the geopolitical power base in those communities with power and

undermine those without it." Thus, we see how the same issues to led to the civic unrest

in Ferguson following the shooting of Michael Brown continue to manifest themselves in

its schools and classrooms.

National, state, and local policies combined with regional inequity have

circulated power from far beyond the four walls of the classroom to great effect. But,

what of the material resources that served as mediational means for the discourses of

accountability? How can those be traced to reveal the ways in which the boundaries of the classroom extend far beyond its four walls? For example, the annual MAP test is developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Jefferson City, Missouri and administered and scored by Data Recognition Corporation headquartered in Maple Grove, MN. The monthly Star Test that students took is developed by Renaissance Learning headquartered in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. And the on-demand writing assessment that was administered and reported quarterly was developed by Lucy Calkins and colleagues in New York and distributed by Heinemann in Portsmouth, NH.

These assessments, which were mandated by the school district as a method of surveillance, were accepted by school administrators as powerful indicators of student growth and performance. Thus, the scores associated with the assessments became a salient way of rendering students in this school space. Yet, reliance on tests that are created by corporate testing companies far removed from the classroom ignores the professional insight of the teachers and the individual needs of the students, thereby reducing teaching to the act of assessing and learning to the act of test taking. I would argue, however, that the student writing and thinking that have been outlined throughout this dissertation offer a more complex understanding of students' literacy acquisition and development, as well as the ways in which it can be improved, than the numbers associated with the above-named assessments. Yet, they profoundly impacted the school culture and, thus, classroom practices.

Classroom spaces and practices are not shaped by assessments alone. The curricular materials are also implicated. It would be difficult to sort through the multitude of daily decisions that Sioux and I made in terms of the curriculum; however, the Lucy

Calkins *Units of Study* served as a mediational means to regulate teachers' and students'

behavior, a point I illustrated time and again in chapter four. As I taught from, analyzed,

and evaluated the lived realities associated with the implementation of these materials,

one contradiction has come up time and again for me: Why I am so resistant to these

materials? As a fourth-grade teacher, I implemented a writing workshop approach in my

classroom and I considered resources by Lucy Calkins (e.g. Calkins, 1994) and other

writing experts (e.g. Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Ray, 1999, 2001) to be valuable assets to

my practice. As a literacy scholar, I believe that process approaches to writing (e.g.

Graves, 1983) combined with modeling by teachers as writers (e.g. Murray, 1996) and

mentor texts (e.g. Ray, 1999) provide powerful methods for improving student writing.

And Lucy Calkins's *Units of Study* have done more to advance writing workshop

approaches into schools than all the books cited above. Indeed, the school my own

children attend uses the Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*, and while I believe this causes the

teachers to over-emphasize some things at the expense of others, I generally feel like my

children are developing as writers. So, why, given my personal beliefs and experiences,

had I come to equate these materials with discourses of accountability and reduced

teacher professionalism? To unpack this, I consider the materials themselves and they

ways in which teachers are positioned by Lucy Calkins within the materials, as well as

the specific methods of implementation mandated by the school district.

The Lucy Calkin's *Units of Study* and the associated resource books promote a

standardized assessment package that is embedded from the first week of school in the

form of the aforementioned on-demand assessments. Thus, rather than critique an

educational landscape that promotes a one-sized-fits-all approach—one that is not found

in the processes of professional writers—Calkins and colleagues instead normalize assessment systems that sort and stratify students, making them into just an essential, everyday part of teaching in workshop classrooms. In regard to the standardized assessment offered in her curricular materials Calkins (2013) writes, "This system of assessment demystifies the Common Core State Standards, allowing students and teachers to work toward a very clear image of what good writing entails" (p. 6). In so doing, she equates qualities of good writing, which are numerous and vary by purpose and audience, with the standards outlined in the CCSS. Likewise, she equates teaching methods with the descriptors of the standards found in the learning progressions, writing, "In the unit of study learning progressions, teachers can see *ways to teach* students to do this [the standard], and they can see how those *techniques* relate to what was taught in the preceding years" [emphasis added] (p. 6). Furthermore, in the book published as a precursor to their curriculum package, Calkins and colleagues position teachers who complain about the CCSS as "curmudgeons," suggesting instead that educators view the standards "as if they are gold" (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012, p. 3). This either/or dichotomy treats the standards as a whole, rather than a complex set of working parts, and assumes that a singular, agreed-upon "image of good writing" can be found within them. In addition, it associates teachers who oppose the CCSS, in part or whole, as being whiney and out-of-touch, whereas those who embrace them understand their assumed inevitable role in a progressive educational future.

Although Calkins (2013) characterizes the units of study as detailed models and not scripts, she writes in a way that assumes teachers should and will follow each step.

For example, in the session rationale and description for lesson one of the third-grade

narrative unit Calkins and Martinelli (2013) write:

> Today, then, instead of initiating *writing*, you'll initiate *dreaming*. You will help
>
> the youngsters in your classroom to begin to imagine the kinds of thing they'll be
>
> making, starting tomorrow….Today you will create a drumroll around a brand-
>
> new and very grown-up tool—the writer's notebook. (pp. 2-3)
>
> Notice how the language lacks modal words such as "might" or "could." Instead,

the future tense "will," and the pronoun "you" is used to speak directly to the reader.

Through both the language used in the units themselves and Calkins' (2013) suggestion

that teaching writing well really only consists of "just a few teaching methods that one

needs to know and be able to use" (p. 3), she obscures the complex decision making that

goes into responding to and using student writing to guide and differentiate instruction,

thereby reducing the act of teaching writing to a simple series of steps. This contributes to

the deprofessionalized characterization of teachers-as-technicians.

The one nod Calkins and colleagues do give to teachers as professionals is a

consistent emphasis on the importance of professional development. Calkins (2013)

expresses the importance of teacher learning and autonomy in such phrases as, "when

teachers receive the education they deserve in the teaching of writing…" (p. 2) and

"when a community of teachers embraces reform in the teaching of writing…" (p. 3); yet,

she lets school districts off the hook for creating such professional environments when

she promotes a commercial curriculum package that "doubles as both curricular support

and professional development" (p. 3). This statement not only provides rationale for

districts to avoid supplying the time and money for professional learning and

collaboration (since they can simply provide teachers with this curriculum instead), it

also belies Calkins' understanding of the realities of contemporary school and classroom

contexts.

Not only are the materials themselves aligned with discourses of accountability

through the assessment package and the positioning of teachers, the ways in which the

school district mandated their implementation served to further circulate such discourses.

Rather than serving as a curricular framework or guide, the materials became associated

with social practices of regulation and surveillance. Observations by administrators and

"muckity mucks" (Sioux's words from a planning meeting, excerpted in chapter four)

who could presumably determine a teacher's effectiveness based on a "walk-through"

(from "The Gregory Way" newsletter) were the norm in the school district. The focus on

mini-lessons and the structure outlined within the Lucy Calkins' materials provided a

checklist of sorts for administrators to quickly evaluate whether teachers were following

the materials. In addition, the reporting of the on-demand assessment data to the district

on a quarterly basis further served to manage and regulate teachers' behaviors. Thus, we

see the district's perceived need to evaluate teachers' behaviors to ensure that they are

focused on their assumed primary jobs, which is to improve student test scores on

standardized tests. In addition, the fact alone that these materials were mandated

demonstrate the district's belief that literacy improvement is best accomplished through

scripted, commercial curricula, rather than by extending teacher professionalism through

the collaborative development of teaching units and materials.

Within chapter four, I conducted a micro-analysis of portions of a mini-lesson to

show the ways in which the methods of disciplinary power use to manage teachers was

circulated into the classroom to manage student bodies. However, this, too, seems to stem from discourses of accountability. Is it possible that teachers feel a need to manage student bodies because they know that testing and test-like activities are not naturally engaging for children? Would these methods of control focused on obedience and conformity be necessary if students were engaged in authentic literacy practices that met their needs for belonging, novelty, and optimal challenge? Admittedly, I find myself wondering about the practicality of how schooled spaces might be shaped if not through the disciplining of bodies; yet, maybe my short-sightedness is the result of my habitus formed in schooled spaces not much different than those of Gregory Elementary. We know that learning happens all the time across social spaces. How can we re-imagine schools to be places that more naturally build on the interests and developmental paths of the children themselves? I don't have the answers to those questions, and maybe my inquiries reflect the limited perspective of one who has never tried to run an entire school. Yet, I do know that just as school spaces have been shaped through the policies, regional discourses, and material means, so too do they have the potential to be reshaped. Thus, I turn now to a reflection on how Sioux and I made space for critical literacy, even within this stifling culture of accountability.

Making Space for Critical Literacy. Our goal to have students narrate their experiences as members of the Ferguson community and use words, images, and actions to shape a vision of their community space was eventually realized through our fourth quarter community mapping study; however, the enacted curriculum varied significantly from what we had imagined. The school context and the larger discourses of accountability positioned students as successful literacy learners based solely on

standardized test scores and teachers as mere technicians of pre-defined curriculum. This is a positioning that we actively tried to disrupt by maintaining a stance of critical professional practice (Stillman, 2011). That stance was displayed through our integration of our knowledge about literacy learning with the mandated curriculum; our willingness to navigate the political climate of the school on behalf of students' best interests; and our authentic sense of purpose to enact literacy practices that were culturally responsive and promoted equity. Even as we were mandated to closely follow the Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*, we sought to integrate the concept of placemaking into each unit. Our consistent efforts to help students recognize the ways in which places and texts are culturally produced and therefore open to redesign led to various critical literacy practices. In the sections that follow, I will explain how each of Janks (2010) concepts of critical literacy was addressed through our enacted curriculum.

Diversity. From our very first unit of study right on through to our culminating film festival, we invited students' identities and their home spaces into our classroom as part of the official curriculum. This started early on with the narrative and poetry units as we worked to build community by having students share their "small moments" stories and "Where I'm From" poems in order to draw attention to the diverse ways of being within the classroom. Later in the information writing unit, we focused on activists from various cultures, time periods, and places in the world, both male and female, young and old. Students learned and shared the impact of different individuals on the unfolding history of our planet and the power of courageous individuals to spark change. Within the opinion writing unit, students were able to voice their celebrations of people in their lives, as well as those things they wanted to improve in their community, which highlighted a

diversity of perspectives. Later, during our community mapping unit, students were not only invited to bring material aspects of home to the classroom through photos and videos, they were provided many possibilities for how they might story place. Some students chose to write close to home, while others took on the larger topic of Ferguson as a community.

Access. In this school context that was so heavily focused on test scores, it was clear that helping students access Standard English was highly important. However, Janks (2010) cautions that we must provide access to dominant discourses without devaluing students' home languages. Thus, rather than focusing solely on how to help students perform better on standardized tests, we focused on helping them find and develop their writing voices. We sought to position students as people who had important things to say and who used writing as a form of expression. To this end, we spent time across many units analyzing authors' use of craft techniques such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, metaphor, simile, and sensory details. We showed them that these techniques were things they could (and should) use too, and we asked them to be purposeful in their use of such techniques. Through the course of our units students were introduced to various modes of writing, genres, and text structures. Moreover, in conferences we might ask students what techniques they had tried, or we might point out a structure that they had used in order to name it for them. At the same time that we were teaching them to use the craft techniques, they were also being introduced to some advanced vocabulary related to English Language Arts. Finally, we placed a great deal of emphasis on audience and purpose. We wanted students to recognize the difference between those times when spelling and mechanics do not need to be the primary emphasis, such as

notetaking or a first draft, and times when they needed to make sure they were putting

their very best writing forward, such as when they are publishing for a real audience and

they want others to recognize them as third graders who know how to write well.

  Domination. This concept was the trickiest to incorporate because it seemed to be

the most at odds with the school context. Yet, through our continued emphasis on

placemaking and by following the lead of the students we were able to have critical

conversations with students regarding race and racism, gender bias, forms of non-violent

protest, the role of police in a civil society, voting rights, and social action. One way that

this was brought about was through our information writing unit, in which students

researched famous activists from around the world. As students read and learned about

their activist, their questions and commentary increased. Thus, our discussions were a

natural extension of the topics that they were reading and writing about. Then, we more

purposefully engaged students with critical content during our community mapping unit;

however, we continued to let the students' wonderings and interests be our guide. For

example, early on the students completed KWL charts on Ferguson. Within those charts

many students spoke of or asked questions about the shooting of Michael Brown and the

resulting protests. This opened the door for having conversations around that topic. Later,

they took pictures of election signs, which provided an opening to talk about government

representation and voting rights. In addition, students had much to say about what they

had observed, questioned, and understood about issues of power through their writing,

especially within the community mapping unit when they were given implicit permission

to write about such topics.

Design. Although all writing can be considered design of a sort, it was through our community mapping unit that we introduced students to multimodal designs. The multimodal writing products offered additional learning opportunities beyond what print alone could provide. The students learned about copyright and how to search for photos labeled for noncommercial reuse. They learned to consider both content and context when selecting pictures to match their words, and they learned how music can add to or distract from the mood of a piece. Some learned how to time voice overs and the importance of phrasing and expression when trying to get a point across. Through the different resources afforded them with the videos, they were able to get across powerful messages about their homes and communities. Collectively, the videos provided a nuanced view of Ferguson and students took on multiple stances in regard to their community.

Methodological Considerations

In chapter one I laid out the purposes for this study in terms of the following goals:

- (Re)position students as powerful literacy learners who believe in their capacity to use literacy in powerful ways and for powerful purposes.

- Create counter-narratives to an educational reform movement that routinely characterizes students as deficit through the high-stakes testing regime.

- Provide means for students to reconstruct the dominant narrative of Ferguson that was created through the media.

- Develop students' sense of agency to act in the world.

In chapter three, I described this study as a collaborative action research study based in critical, qualitative methodology. Critical qualitative researchers do not claim to remain

neutral, unaffected observers, nor do they make claims that the findings will be generalizable to other populations. Although critical research is oriented in the values and positionalities of the researchers, the findings must be founded in rigorous methodology that has in place various processes to ensure validity (Carspecken, 1996; Lather, 1986). In qualitative research, validity is usually thought of in terms of trustworthiness or credibility and reliability is considered in terms of the consistency or dependability of the data presented (Merriam, 2009). Lather (1986) calls on critical researchers to guard against biases that might distort the logic of evidence by attending to the following concepts: *construct validity*; *face validity*; *catalytic validity;* and *triangulation*.

In this section I examine the extent to which our goals were met through the enacted research methodologies. I do so by focusing on each construct within the defined methodology: Is what ways can this research be considered critical? Was it truly collaborative? In what ways was it action-based and what social action took place within or as a result of the study? Can I make the case that this study represents rigorous methodology? As I attend to each of these questions, I address issues of quality and trustworthiness based on Lather's (1986) concepts.

Critical. In the previous discussion of how schooled spaces were shaped throughout this study, I attended to two critically-oriented theories—critical spatial theory and critical pedagogy. I attempted to shine light on the ways in which institutional power contributed to the shaping of the classroom space, as well as the ways in which Sioux and I made space for critical literacy despite those limitations. I now examine the presented findings in terms *construct validity*, especially as related to the demonstrated circulation of institutional power.

Construct validity refers to the extent to which a study is grounded in theoretical concepts, allowing a researcher to appropriately operationalize a given construct and draw logical inferences. This requires prioritizing participants' daily, lived experiences, while considering how the researcher's own understanding and interpretations are impacted by his or her prior knowledge and social positioning (Lather, 1986). Although this research is not situated in critical race methodology (e.g. DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), within the pages of this dissertation, I have highlighted the desire that Sioux and I had to help students tell counter stories. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define counter storytelling as "a method of telling those stories of people whose experiences are not often told" and as "a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (p. 32). To what extent does the data presented in this dissertation serve as a counter-story?

To answer this question, I begin with a reflection on what students' writing shows about their literate abilities. Within the pages of this dissertation, I have sought to present many examples of student writing in various forms across participants in order to highlight the varied communicative competencies of these students. I have tried to let the students' writing speak for itself. To this end, I did not make corrections to student writing. I presented it just as they wrote it. Only in cases where I worried that spelling or grammar errors detracted from the writing did I use brackets to help clarify. Within the pages of this dissertation, I did not analyze student writing using a scoring rubric as is expected within the learning progression that is part of the Lucy Calkins' assessment package. Yet, I think that one could look across the writing and draw the conclusion that the students have room for growth in terms of their command with Standard English.

However, I think it is also fair to conclude that the writing the students produced revealed complex thinking, evidence of learning, and authentic voices, which at times, reflected the innocence of children, while at other times, revealed a sophistication well beyond their years.

Consider the fact that the student writing presented in these pages was produced by eight and nine-year-old children. In less than a decade of life, these children have learned to understand and express the English language verbally, as well as decode and encode the written symbols associated with it. Yet, the standardized test scores that are such a prominent focus in today's educational landscape render children in terms of deficits. In Table 1 (see chapter three), I presented student participants' test score data. These data show that of 14 participants, fewer than 30% scored proficient or above on the annual MAP test they took in May of 2016. For example, among others, Maya, Ayana, and Celso scored in the "basic" range. Yet, in chapter two I showed how Maya masterfully used personification in her poem "November," and the case studies of Celso and Ayana presented at the end of each findings chapter demonstrated the complex ways in which these students storied place. The same deficit discourses that present themselves within the narrative of "failing schools" often shine a negative light on the competencies of the students, they also paint students' home lives with the same broad brush. Yet, the student writing presented in chapter five revealed literate, supportive home environments. Thus, I argue that in looking across multiple students' writing and in attending closely to a few students' compositions, this research study can, indeed, be read as a counter-story to the deficit discourses associated with the educational reform movement.

As educators who work within and care about the public-school system and as the teachers of this particular group of students, the counter-story related to the proficiencies of the students is at least, in part, mine and Sioux's to tell. We are insiders to and characters in this unfolding narrative. However, the same cannot be said for our related, but distinct goal of helping the children to (re)story Ferguson. As European American women, we both have a stake in the ways in which our region is shaped and a responsibility to fight for an equitable future for all St. Louisan. Yet, we not only experience a different lived reality than our students and families of color, we are also implicated in the systematic institutionalized racism that renders students and families in deficit discourses.

I think it's fair to say that the students' writing presented in chapter five does, indeed, paint a different picture of Ferguson than that which was presented in the national media. However, given the extent of the disciplinary power that circulated through the schooled spaces, I question to what extent the students were truly empowered to provide accurate representations of their communities. Sioux and I played a large role in helping students shape their final videos. Just as students read Sioux's behavior and responded accordingly during mini-lessons, it is not a stretch to assume that our mediated actions during the course of the community mapping unit implicitly encouraged to create products of which we improved. This can be traced at least in part to the unsupportive school atmosphere, which hindered our ability to engage students in critical dialogue to a greater extent. However, it still begs the question: whose stories were actually told— those that the students wanted to be told or those that we allowed them to tell?

DeCuir & Dixson (2004) point to five tenets of critical race theory: counter story-telling, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, critiques of colorblindness and neutrality associated with liberalism, and interest convergence. As discussed above, this study focused on inviting and amplifying counter-stories from students. In addition, I at least attempted to draw attention to the cyclical and permanent nature of racism and the notion of whiteness as property through the sections of this dissertation that explored regional issues related to history and spatiality. Through discussions of literacy as a social practice and attention to the concept of educational hierarchization, I critiqued the idea that literacy can be considered in a universal way or accurately measured using standardized tests. However, in turning to a reflexive lens on my role as researcher and the tenet of interest convergence, I find myself questioning whether this study has served me better than it has or will the students of color with whom I worked. This dissertation serves as the final step in my journey to earning a Pd.D., a credential that offers not only opportunity for increased economic capital, but also a greater likelihood of cultural and social capital. While I can hope that the pedagogy that Sioux and I enacted led to greater cultural capital for the students as they gained competence with academic literacy, this study did not improve the students' lived reality. This is a point I return to when discussing catalytic validity in the section below.

Collaborative. Carr and Kemmis (1984) assert that action research in education is not simply research *on* or *about* education conducted by experts outside of the educational institutional; rather, it is a participatory, collaborative endeavor rooted *in* real educational practices *for* and *with* participants in educational settings. No doubt this study happened within the natural setting of the classroom in coordination with Sioux, the

classroom teacher, and the students. Sioux and I collaboratively designed and enacted the pedagogy, and we did so in order to help (re)discover and amplify the voices of the students. However, the authority inherent in our positions could have hindered our ability to establish open, supportive relationships that actively encouraged participants to question perceptions and offer alternative explanations.

It is equally true to say this entire study was designed and enacted without the perspectives or input of people of color in positions of authority. There were no teachers of color who collaboratively designed curriculum with us and the parents and other family members of the students were not participants in the study, nor were they present in classroom happenings. In fact, the only adult voice of color who took part in our curricular practices was Joseph Wells, the former mayor of Kinloch, whom we invited to talk to the students. This is not to say that we didn't incorporate culturally relevant texts, but simply to recognize the limitations of our pedagogical design.

This leads me to what I consider to be a major limitation of this study—the fact that I can only partially account for *face validity*. According to Lather (1986), *face validity* can be accomplished through the use of member checks. This allows participants to verify and/or contradict a researcher's emergent findings, thereby providing opportunity for refinement in light of alternate interpretations. However, due to the fact that I no longer have a connection to the school via Sioux, I have not been able to member check the findings with the students. Even if I were able to, there is a case to be made that they might be compelled to corroborate the findings simply as a result of their limited perceptions of their situations and the ways in which those perceptions may be influenced by my authority as their former teacher.

Finally, I refer to Sioux and I as a co-researchers and co-teachers throughout the study, yet the power was not distributed equally within these dual roles. Given Sioux's experience as a public educator working with children of color, I often deferred to her judgment and let her take on the majority of the face-to-face teaching. I not only knew I had much to learn from her, I did not want to deprofessionalize her by claiming some sort of expert status simply due to my position as a university-based researcher. Beyond that, I knew she was the one who was facing the administrative pressures and had more at stake in terms of employment than I did, so I was cautious not to push too hard in a direction she was not willing to go. On the other hand, much of the research work has been mine alone. Although I submitted drafts to Sioux for member checking and was in conversation with her to clarify my understanding of certain classroom happenings, I had sole responsibility for organizing, selecting, and analyzing the data for this dissertation. This served to position her as a participant rather than a co-researcher.

This skewed balance of power has resulted in limitations. For example, Sioux and I brought different motivations to the study, which reflected our different social positions. She was interested in helping students write to heal and discover, a pedagogical motivation. While I agreed with that motivation, I saw this as a potential opportunity to practice activist research. In failing to clearly articulate our different but overlapping motivations, I missed opportunities to introduce Sioux to critical social theories that might have helped her to rationalize her pedagogical decision-making. Moreover, in not taking on a greater teaching role, I failed to attempt restorative justice practices and was instead further implicated in the structural racism of the school system, rather than

disrupting it. Yet, even in recognizing the limitations that were the result of these power imbalances, I struggle to consider alternate pathways given the significant time demands of both classroom teaching and conducting research.

Social action. Critical qualitative research is defined by the desire for change, critique, transformation, and empowerment. While I argue that there has no doubt been a focus on critique, I find myself wondering to what end. The material and lived reality of the participants is not better for having participated in this study. This brings me to the concept of *catalytic validity*, which refers to the extent to which the research brought about change and transformation. Thus, I turn now to explore issues related to social action and agency.

Janks (2010) borrows from Gee's (2011) big "D", little "d" notion of discourse to draw a distinction between the Politics of the world (big "P" Politics) and the politics of everyday life (small "p" politics). In the context of this study, Politics (with a capital P) are those issues related to the socio-historical context of Ferguson, debates over police brutality and the militarization of police forces, and the overarching problem of institutional racism in our country's institutions. The little "p" politics, on the other hand, are those things having to do with children's day-to-day lives as members of families, schools, and communities. Although we attempted to bring some of the big "P" Politics to light during our study, it was the little "p" politics that were foregrounded throughout most of the year. Thus, the work we did during this year-long study did not contribute in a public way to conversations around the larger social issues within the community of Ferguson. In other words, there was no large-scale social action taken by the students on behalf of their community. However, by giving the students the freedom to explore their

lived realities in terms of both big "P" and little "p" politics positioned the students as agentic beings.

Critical discourse analysts theorize discourse as action. Thus, the students acted by simply producing and sharing their writing. Through this dissertation, I have amplified their voices and positioned them as placemakers. Each of these can be seen as a form of social action. Using mediated discourse analysis, I examined discourse in action. I showed the ways in which the students used imaginative and alternative purposes to reshape the classroom space through the use of Chromebooks. In so doing, they expanded the classroom space, inviting in discourses of popular culture. Yet, it is unclear whether the students' habitus changed in relation to their belief in their capacity to use literacy for agentic means. It is at least possible that as Sioux suggested, this study and our pedagogical design served to help change people's minds about the students, including their own, which would, in turn, affect their future actions. Thus, small seeds of activism could have been planted; however, it would take continued analysis and possibly continued collection of data to determine whether or not that is true.

Research. This research study is situated in just one classroom in one school. Likewise, with exception of community fieldtrips, data collection occurred within the confines of the school day and the classroom. Thus, it is not possible for me to compare my findings across contexts and settings. In addition, as mentioned previously, the interpretive lens in this dissertation is primarily my own. While incorporating different research sites and additional researchers could certainly make the findings more robust, I have taken great care to triangulate the findings in order to address the trustworthiness

and/or credibility of this research study. Lather (1986) compels researchers to consider *triangulation* in terms of data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes.

In chapter three I described the different sources of data, the associated purpose of each source, and the limitations of each method. In presenting the findings, I have relied on interview data, student writing, classroom literacy events, fieldnotes, and planning meetings to ensure that my interpretations hold true across data sources. In chapter three, I also traced the methods I used to analyze data so as make clear my process. I have provided thick descriptions where applicable and embedded the findings directly in varied sources of data. In addition, I looked at the data in different ways. At times, I looked closely at one participant and at other times I looked across participants. I moved back and forth between micro-analytic techniques and thematic analyses that bubbled up from the data. In addition, I focused on the spaces of the school, the classroom, and the larger community contexts. Finally, I relied on various theoretical positions, including sociocultural theory, critical spatial theory, and critical pedagogy, as well as distinct but overlapping analytic frameworks, including critical discourse analysis, mediated discourse analysis and spatial analysis. I have tried in this discussion to make connections across the data sources, as well as the varied findings and theoretical frameworks.

Contribution to the Field

In designing and enacting our collaborative action research study, Sioux and I responded to Ernest Morrell's (2015) call for innovative literacy practices that revolve around an engagement in critical action research and the commitment of educators to be advocates of change. This dissertation has examined the affordances and constraints of enacting critical literacy in a school-based setting, with a particular emphasis on

placemaking and its impact on student agency. In so doing, it has exposed the challenges

of enacting liberatory praxis in a public-school classroom, and illustrated how such

challenges can be mitigated by maintaining a stance of critical professional practice

(Stillman, 2011). Thus, it serves as an example of how social action can be enacted and

embodied through the act of teaching (Rogers, Wetzel, & O'Daniels, 2016).

This study extends Comber and colleagues' work in critical, place-based

pedagogy (e.g. Comber, 2009; Comber, 2015; Comber & Nixon, 2008; Comber et al.,

2006; Comber et al., 2001). Studies that focus specifically on placemaking are not

common in the field of critical literacy research (for exceptions see Kinloch, 2009;

Sanchez, 2011). Comber (2011) calls for "research that addresses the complex

relationships between place-making and text-making, of finding synergies between

critical and place-based pedagogies that move culturally responsive teaching forward into

new theoretical and practice terrain" (p. 346). Within this dissertation, I describe our

attempts to find such synergies. Thus, it not only builds on the limited literature that

exists around placemaking within the field of literacy studies, it also demonstrates how

teachers might crack open spaces for critical, place-based pedagogy in highly regulated

environments.

Comber and Nixon (2011) assert that "both place-based pedagogies and critical

literacy are underpinned by the shared assumption that young people need to develop a

sense of agency, that is, they need to believe that they can make a significant positive

difference in the world" (p.5). Indeed, understanding students' developing sense of

agency to act on the world was a primary impetus for this study. Admittedly, our

pedagogy of placemaking did not make a tangible difference in students' immediate

lives. Within the public-school system, they are still likely to be rendered in terms of deficit discourses and they will continue to live within the inequitable social structures associated with the intersections of race and social class. However, building on Rogers, Wetzel, and O'Daniels (2016), I illustrated how embodied social action and agency could be revealed through discourses as action and discourses in action.

The #BlackLivesMatter movement that gained momentum after Michael Brown was fatally shot reminds us that there is much work to be done to ensure the civil rights of African Americans. Jackson and Beaudry (2015) call for more student-centered instruction that is tailored to individual needs, social context, and learning styles, as well as the development of black leaders who will address the issues, challenges and opportunities that affect their neighborhoods and communities. This dissertation examined how authentic, purposeful literacy practices focused on community places and spaces invited students to discover, interrogate, celebrate, and reshape their community. Along the way it highlighted the complexities of negotiating competing narratives and the ways in which a home space can be both a lived space and a symbolic space. As children storied the places and spaces closest to them through literacy, they not only displayed their communicative competence, they also designed possible futures that they imagine for themselves and their community. Thus, such practices might have set these students on the trajectory to become community leaders who know how to use literacy to get things accomplished and promote positive change.

Directions for Future Research

I end this dissertation with a consideration of directions for future study. I begin with the ways in which I would like to continue to follow-up with the findings presented

here and the data collected before turning to the ways in which future research could build on this study.

One of the primary limitation of this study is the fact that the interpretive lenses of people of color is not present. I believe that I could strengthen that aspect of this study in two ways. First, I could attempt to get in touch with the participants through both the principal of the school and, with Sioux's help, through the parents. This would not only allow me an opportunity to share the findings with them in an age appropriate way, it would also provide a chance for a longitudinal follow-up to solicit students' memories and reflections on the work we did after time has passed. In this way, it could be possible to determine whether the literate practices students engaged in during this study had an impact on their future actions. In addition, I would like to find a way to bring in the voices of scholars of color. At a minimum, I would like feedback from critical friends who can help me see my blind spots; however, I would also like to be able to collaboratively analyze these data and/or other data to provide continued insight. In future studies, I will be more purposeful in addressing this limitation to the extent possible as part of the research design.

Another way that I intend to work with the data from this study is to continue examining the classroom literacy events. With over 80 hours of recorded classroom events, it was impossible to do much more than scratch the surface for this dissertation. However, I would like to try to trace the ways in which whole group conversations and student-teacher conferences impacted students' final videos. I believe that this will help shed additional light on my understanding of student agency. I also believe there is much

to be learned by focusing more closely on individual participants across the recorded classroom literacy events.

My experiences in conducting a collaborative action research study have helped illuminate many of the benefits and challenges of this research methodology. I believe that future research need to explore the ways in which parity between university researchers and classroom teachers can be achieved in collaborative action research. In addition, because of its potential to reposition teachers as professionals, we need more examples of collaborative action research. However, given the many demands of classroom teaching, we need methodologies that are manageable for teachers and are responsive to their unique needs. This necessarily includes a continued focus on collaboratively analyzing data in situ.

I call for more research that examines the ways in which critical literacy practices can be effectively carried out in schools. To begin with I think we need a better understanding of how to define success as it relates to critical literacy. In terms of student growth and change, we need studies that measure the impact of critical literacy pedagogy in terms of literacy achievement without succumbing to the notion that standardized tests are an accurate way to do so. In terms of teacher practice, we need to understand how successful critical literacy teachers navigate the discourses of accountability that are embedded in school districts across the nation. What characteristics do such teachers embody? In what ways are the schooled spaces shaped to allow for successful implementation of crucial literacy practices?

Finally, in considering placemaking as a pedagogical focus within critical literacy, we need additional studies that show how attention to community and out-of-school

spaces can serve to engage students in academic literacy. In addition, as a field we need to consider the ways in which literacy research can contribute to students' understandings about police brutality and racialized violence, as well as how they can use words, images, and action to take reshape community spaces in the interest of equity and justice.

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Appendix 1

Sample Analysis of Ayana's Writing

Title	Date Created	Mode	Topics	Word Count	# of Revisions	Revision notes	Observations / Questions
School	4/1/2016	Narrative (morning to bed story)	school; what she does after school	129	4	She primarily drafted the piece in 22 min. on 4/1. She started a new paragraph later on 4/1 but never completed her initial thought of "I can be better in school by." On 4/25 she changed the font. It is not evident what she did on 4/27.	Another line I love by Ayana: I like school like I like my dog.But my dog can't teach me anything and help me learn like school can." This line is the opening line. It makes it seem like the piece is going to be a commentary about how much she likes school, but then she starts talking about how she takes her dog for a walk when she gets home from school and from there it turns into a list of everything she does after school, including going to sleep and getting up the next day (and then...and then...and then...).
My Snapshops and Thoughtshots	4/6/2016	Descriptive (thoughtshot)	Chambers road is dangerous. Saw a lady with a baby who she thought was going to get hit.	95	3	In the morning on 4/6, she drafted. Later, in the afternoon, she added this line: "and I thought she and her baby was going to get hit by a car so I worryed" On 4/25 she changed the font.	I can remember working with Ayana on this piece, encouraging her to make it clear how dangerous Chambers road is so that it would be clear to a reader why seeing a lady cross the street with a baby would cause concern. This piece has lots of organizational issues...the sentences are out of order. This is likely because of my instruction to her to make clear in the beginning why it is dangerous. She likely would have fixed this if she had returned to this piece.
The Burned Down Place	4/11/2016	Opinion (commentary)	the burned down nail shop that she used to go to with her mom and her wishes	244	14	On the morning of 4/11, Ayana began with a picture of the Dellwood Washer & Dryer. Then removed that and added a picture of a well-manicured house across the street from school. Then she deleted that and added a picture of some election signs and the sentence, "I wish I can vote." Later, in the afternoon, she adds "because I would've voted for Pat Crowan" before deleting the picture and the words and adding the photo of the burned down nail shop. For the next 15 min., she writes to this photo. She continues adding to her piece for 21 min. on the morning of 4/12. Then in the afternoon, she plays around with the picture placement a bit, sometimes removing it altogether and other times moving it to the end and the middle. She also deletes and then rewrites the title. Finally, the last thing she does on 4/12 is to delete the entire	I wonder if Ayana had second thoughts while writing this...there were two times when she deleted the entire thing, only to restore it. Was this by mistake, or did this feel too risky to her? I have our conversation on 4/14 video recorded (and probably audio recorded too). So this would be a good one to go back and transcribe. I want to see her facial expressions and body language, she is not much of a talker, so I would imagine any "conversation" we had would be mostly me talking.

							piece! On the morning of 4/13 her piece is back (restored a previous revision?). She continues working on it for 43 minutes. At one point during this time, she writes and highlights this: "I wish all the protesting will stop going on. And the protesting was never realy." She comes back to the piece later in the afternoon on 4/13 and works for an additional 29 minutes. She then deleted the entire piece again at 12;31 before restoring it at 12:37. On 4/14 was when Ayana and I conferenced to work on her piece. We made several significant revisions, primarily as related to organization. On 4/25 she changed the font. On 5/10, she plays with the size of the font. On 5/11, 5/12, & 5/18 she goes back and does very minor edits.
Peace in our community	4/25/2016	Opinion (commentary)	will there be peace in ferguson	59	3	Drafted the morning of 4/25 in 6 min.. Returned to it two other times, but made no significant changes or additions.	Here she uses, "our community." She does not have an optimistic viewpoint of peace in Ferguson, but thinks maybe in a couple of years things will be better. I wish this piece had more detail...
pictures	4/25/2016	visual (collage)	Germany	n/a	1	Added nine pictures of different things in Germany.	??? I really have no idea how this came about. Subversive writing.
Joseph Wells	4/27/2016	informational (reporting on events)	Joseph Well's visit to the school	63	1	Wrote about the things that Joseph Wells told the class for 7 minutes. (He talked about...He talked about...He talked about...).	Reporting rather than reaction

Appendix 2

Sample of Data Index

Date	General Descriptor of teaching & learning activities	Data Type (audio, video, document, fieldnotes)	Duration	Label (planning, artifact, researcher memo, lesson, interview, etc.)	Other matching data sources??	File Name	Description	Notes/Memos	Keywords/ Open codes / Initial analysis
Tues, Mar 8	Close reading of The Relatives Came	video	1:03:25	lesson	yes	TheRelativesCame_3-08-16	We guided the student though an analysis of the craft moves in The Relatives Came. Focus on how "home" was evoked in the writing.	kids at carpet most of the lesson. lots of teacher talk. Pretty typical of most small group lessons at the carpet	Teacher-directed
Thurs, Mar 10	KWL share and comment on Google docs	video	00:22;28	lesson	yes	FergKWLShare_3-10-16	students were able to see the compiled answers for the KWL chart created the previous day. They were taught how to comment on the text of a Google doc and were able to read and comment on what others said.	drew on comment feature to try to connect with students' affinity for technology & "texting"	technology
Fri, Mar 11	Video Juxtaposition	video	1:10:06	lesson	yes	VideoJuxta_Combined_3-11-16	video juxtaposition with two camera angles and overlapping audio (combined three files to create…all are stored in folder for 3-11-16)	Rich conversation amongst students; many suggested that Ferguson was still a dangerous place even though they also said they regularly play outside and feel safe outside their homes.	storying ferguson
Mon, Mar 14	Developing Survey Questions for Google Form	video	1:08:38	lesson	yes	CreatingQuestionnaire_3-14-16	We talked about how to create questions that would garner a lot of information; kids worked in pairs to come up with questions; part of this video show Zac and Celso working together and Desean & Corey working together.	This video combined two videos using picture in picture. Only ONE audio source is heard--the audio from the iPad recording--because it was the best chance to capture Celso & Zac's conversation....not sure though, if I will be able to hear audio for either pair of students. If cannot hear everything, then check the raw videos in the data folder on hard drive & the audio back-up	Noah feigns violence toward SR

Tues, Mar 15	Voting on Questions that will go on Google form	video	1:08:24	lesson	yes	Voting OnQue stions_ 3-15-16	This lesson starts with a brief chat about some drills in which students will be participating later. Then we discuss how we are going to use stickers and rotate various groups to have students "vote" on which questions they think should be on our Google questionnaire. The rest of the video captures the voting process.	This is two camera angles edited into one video using PiP. In hind sight, I don't realize why we didn't have another Ferguson-related activity/lesson going on while kids votes….oh well, hind sight is 20/20...	
Tues, Mar 29	Reading poems from the book "Home" and then writing about home	video	1:01:22	lesson	yes	Home Writing _3-29-16	Mini lesson & Independent Writing; SR read two poems from a poetry anthology of poems focused on home. With students we identified the authors craft moves used. Then students made a list of places that are home to them and they started drafting a "home" piece	Video includes two camera angles. The audio backup is overlaid during the independent writing time to try to capture some of the conversations I had with kids during that time	
Wed, Mar 30	Reading *Uptown*	video	1:05:59	lesson	no	Uptow n_3-30-16	Sioux read the book Uptown, we discussed craft moves, and then she read it again. Kids then tried to use craft moves in their own "home" writing.	Lots of action from Noah in this one. During M.L. he is moving all over the place. At one point he lightly brushes my hair. I don't notice, but some of the other kids point out the video camera to him. He turns and mouths something. I lead the discussion of craft moves from my place on the carpet. The juxtaposition of me on the carpet with the kids vs. SR on the chair in the front of the room is noteworthy, but not sure why. Later, during independent writing, one video camera captures Noah & Maya playing with the other video camera. This seems like something worthy of MDA. Also, later Noah breaks a ruler while I have my back turned and the whole table gets distracted. Also, at one point, Maya tries to lightly brush my hair as I walk past...	Kid-space; surveillanc e

Thurs, Mar. 31	Memory Map	video	1:15:31	lesson	yes	MemoryMap_3-31-16	Video of SR's mini lesson and the independent writing time before specials; after specials (transition in the video) the kids have a bit of IW time after specials and then they pair-share their memory maps	A handful of kids were gone during the ML and did not come back until Ind. Writing time. These kids left the room every day for "intervention." They had to miss part of special class on every other day of the week. I REALLY wish that I could've captured some of the students conversations about their memory maps. I would have loved to hear how they "storied" place through the maps. In hindsight, I now know that in future projects I need to make time for kids to explain to me while I record. This may not be a bit different retelling that they would give to their classmates, but at least I would have something.	testing/focus on test scores
Fri, April 1	City Poetry drawing & writing	video	1:12:23	lesson	yes	CityPoetry_4-1-16	I taught the mini-lesson. Kids drew as they listened to poems about city spaces. Then they were supposed to write a poem using sensory details about a home space. During IW, they were using stickers to "vote" on which questions they wanted to include on the parent questionnaire/interview protocol	There is a point early on in the video, when I am walking up to the front of the room to start the ML. I walk by Ayana and as I pass by she makes a disgusted looking face at Desean. Just another example of those interactions that took place out of mine & SRs view (behind our backs if you will...) but was picked up on the camera.	surveillance
Mon, April 4	What are fieldnotes & election discussion	video	1:04:27	lesson	yes	Fieldnotes&Election_4-4-16	SR talked with kids about what fieldnotes are and showed an example of fieldnotes she created when she was out and about in the community. I talked about the upcoming election and the city candidates whose signs the students might have seen around town. Kids then had time to explore Ferguson & Dellwood websites and take fieldnotes as they explored	[Administrator] popped in at beginning of lesson. This is an example of how he is straight business. He never said a word of greeting to the students (or to us) and wanted to talk to SR about testing schedule. It was also during this time that we found out that Jalisa's uncle is the mayor of Dellwood.	school culture

Appendix 3

Analysis of the Trialectics of Spatiality

	Questions I Asked	Recurring Themes Across Data Set Based on Questions
Perceived Space (First Space)	How is the physical space of the classroom arranged?	• Mostly tables with 4 – 5 students; some students sit at individual desks • Stacks of extra chairs; tubs of supplies stacked up; many pieces of furniture; open carpet space in front of smartboard; tight walkways & passing areas
	What types of activities take place in which spaces?	• Carpet area always where whole-group mini-lesson happens • Independent writing at tables; occasionally independent reading at other places in the room • Collaborative activities at tables or on carpet/floor
	What objects are salient across learning episodes?	• Chromebooks • Clipboards • Lucy Calkins Units of Study • Book boxes • Smart Board • Writer's Notebooks • Books • Video cameras and audio recorders
	How do bodies move in relation to objects and space?	• Lining up • Coming to and sitting at carpet • Handing out and collecting Chromebooks • End of the day getting of binders, backpacks, and stacking of chairs • Restroom breaks
Conceived Space (Second Space)	What are the official classroom/school rules?	• Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports • Posters in classroom--one of each for Safe, Cooperative, Respectful, Peaceful, each poster has four rules posted • PBIS rules repeated via large bulletin board in the hallway with rules for different locations (e.g. hallway, cafeteria, playground, etc. • Poster for "Voice levels" • DoJo Points • PBIS "parties" and rewards
	What are the procedural norms?	• Line up in a particular order • Assigned seats at tables and at carpet • Restroom breaks

		•	Kids very rarely leave the classroom unless with whole class; only a few students who get chosen to deliver messages, etc.
		•	Lunch choices
	What are the norms related to literacy learning?	•	Mini-lessons at carpet, teacher directed with opportunities for partner sharing (assigned partners)
		•	Independent work time – generally quiet
		•	MyOn – computerized reading program
		•	Writing on Chromebooks
		•	Checklists and "on-demand" assessments
		•	STAR testing
		•	Running records
Lived Space (Third Space)	What are some observed ruptures and/or tensions within first or second space?	•	Kids express dislike of carpet space
		•	Students sent away from the carpet space
		•	Behavior of students when Katie teaching vs. when Sioux teaching
		•	Tension between research agenda and mandated curriculum
		•	Ayana wet her pants at end of day
		•	Problems with pushing/shoving in line
		•	Reggie's claims of racism
	In what ways were objects and/or bodies in space appropriated or resisted?	•	Chromebooks facilitated learning
		•	Students appropriated blog for purposes other than what Sioux and I had intended
		•	Google images and popular culture
		•	Noah's physical reactions
		•	Montez's disengagement
		•	Video cameras resisted (surveillance) and appropriated (tours of home & community)
	What are some imaginative uses of objects and bodies?	•	Poetry unit
		•	Community mapping unit
		•	Multimodal film festival
		•	Using Google docs for "texting"
		•	Photos and videos of home and community

Appendix 4

Transcript Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
KO / SR:	Initials are used to identify teachers at each turn of talk; full names are used for students
[ ]	Overlapping speech
=	Contiguous speech
-	Speech that is cut off or self-interrupted; repetition;
::	Prolonged sound
,	Slightly rising pitch, suggesting more to come
?	Rising pitch at end of utterance
.	Falling pitch at end of utterance
( )	Inaudible
(( ))	Non-verbal actions