CURRICULAR AGENTS: ADOLESCENT IMMIGRANT

STUDENTS IN A THIRD-SPACE-IMAGINED-COMMUNITY

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For all my kids…

…my students who ignited my curiosity to begin this study

and

Madison and Norah who provided motivation and new purpose for me to finish it

Acknowledgements

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CURRICULAR AGENTS: ADOLESCENT IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN A THIRD-SPACE-IMAGINED-COMMUNITY

This study was designed using a practitioner-research model (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Serving in dual roles – ESL teacher and researcher of her own instructional practice – the researcher critically examined what happens when adolescent immigrant students are positioned as significant contributors to their literacy curriculum. Engaging a student-led, inquiry based pedagogical model, the students chose 'immigration in the U.S.' as a curricular topic of focus, which guided them into a year-long inquiry of U.S. immigration history and, consequently, a study of racial oppression and discrimination. The teacher-researcher approached her role(s) through the lens of critical multiculturalism (McLaren & Torres, 1999), pursuing greater understanding of race-based, systemic biases, which contributed to generative conversations within the classroom community, as well as personal and professional growth.

The work presents the concept of a 'third-space-imagined-community', which offers concrete connections between theory and practice with respect to teaching and learning environments that include immigrant youth. Four main cyclical, intertwining and inter-temporal elements of theory and practice contribute to the third-space-imagined-community framework. Each cycle informs each other both independently and collectively, creating the potential for dynamic, authentic, and personally relevant learning as well as positive identity development for historically marginalized students and their teacher.

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Chapter 1: Background of the Study

One of my favorite book passages comes from the first chapter of Tony

Johnston's children's novel, Any Small Goodness (2001):

> My name's Arturo, "Turo" for short. For my father, and my grandfather, and *his* father, back and back. Arturos-like stacks of strong adobe bricks, forever, my grandmother says.
>
> Really, my name *was* Arturo. Here's why: Three years ago our family came up from Mexico to L.A. From stories they'd heard, my parents were worried for our safety in "that hard-as-a-fist Los Angeles." But Papi needed better work…
>
> …Luckily, I had some English when I got here. "It is good to have Eeenglish in your pocket," my parents pressed us always, "por las cochinas dudas." For the dirty doubts, that is. Just in case. So, for the dirty doubts, we've all got a little English.
>
> In school, I get Miss Pringle. Miss Pringle's okay, I guess, but if scientists studied her brain, I bet they'd find it to be a large percentage of air. She's always kind of floating where she goes, and talking in a bright and airy way. My friend Raul says she's got "excessive sparkle." Raul loves weird words.
>
> ANYWAY, first day of school, Miss Pringle, all chipper and bearing a rubbery-dolphin smile, says, "Class, this is Arthur Rodriguez." Probably to make things easier on herself. Without asking. *Ya estuvo.* Like a used-up word on the chalkboard, Arturo's erased.

I often shared this passage with students because it seemed to resonate with their personal

experiences and stimulate interest in reading. I also read it for myself, though. It served

as a helpful reminder that every student is a human being with thoughts, feelings, and

experiences unique to him/her; that I have a daily choice to acknowledge or ignore this

fact; and that, despite my best intentions, I have undoubtedly made cultural assumptions

that have hurt my students.

I served as the English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher for nearly a decade

in a large, urban-fringe middle school in the Midwestern United States. The school

community in which I taught was also the community in which I grew up, therefore, my role as a former student and current teacher in the school district held unique perspective and privilege. Working as a colleague amongst my former teachers was a continual reminder of my own schooling experience, for which I carried fond memories and great pride. When I first arrived in the district, former teachers welcomed me warmly; I was a 'good student' who had joined their ranks. Some former teachers approached me to reminisce about 'the good old days', when the suburban school district was recognized for "excellence" in high test scores and graduation rates. But within the same context, "Every year, these kids come to us dumber and dumber," one teacher complained, implying that some of the struggling students I had chosen and was hired to serve were undermining their good efforts. Even as I experienced pride in this school community, during the course of this study, my critical lens was heightened and I began to notice everyday incidents which contributed to or were evidence of systemic biases. Over time, I began to notice that, with the shifting demographics and declining test scores, pedagogy had also changed, diminishing the critical and legitimizing the technical. This was not the school culture I remembered, nor was it one I wanted my students to remember. I realized that my role in this community was both one of *us* and *them*- both powerful and vulnerable; at once, an insider representative of the institution and an outsider advocate voice of resistance for racial and linguistic minority students. Recognizing this tension, it is important for me to mention that all anecdotes disclosed in this study are not intended to shame individuals or organizations; rather, they were and are instructive in understanding the real ways that unintentional and inequitable biases exist in everyday school life.

As is typical for adolescents, the nearly 1,400 students who Eastern Middle School (EMS) all exhibited the challenging experiences of developing and discovering their independent identities. The students I served encountered additional layers of identity-searching – those of bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate identities. At the time of the study, the state in which EMS was located had the third fastest growing Latino population in the United States. According to 2010 Census data (PewHispanicCenter, 2011), the population of Latino residents in EMS' county had grown 154% from 2000 to 2010. Anti-immigrant, and more specifically, anti-Hispanic sentiment was pervasive within the political and social discourse of the Midwestern United States. My adolescent students, neither immune from nor ignorant of these sentiments, would frequently share with me their worries and frustrations of the discrimination, hatred, fear, and ignorance they experienced in their daily lives – both in and out of school.

Current Latino immigrant youth in the Midwestern U.S. are situated in a time and space of political tension. Notably, children of Latino immigrant families are vulnerable to culture shock, and racial and ethnic discrimination in schools. Latino/a students are negatively categorized as poor, lazy, dirty, academically at-risk, culturally deficient, illiterate, and "illegal" (Valencia, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Because of these generalizing preconceptions held by mainstream educators, many Latino/a students develop negative images of themselves as learners, perhaps contributing to higher rates of disciplinary actions taken against them, higher drop-out rates, and lower graduation rates and standardized test scores (Delpit, 2006; Goldstein, 2003; G. Howard, 1999; Li, 2006; Valdes, 1996). Numerous scholars have offered policy and curricular implications for incorporating culturally responsive pedagogical practices, in an effort to be more

inclusive of immigrant and language minority students' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). But, largely, a dichotomy of normalcy versus difference has positioned those who fall into the latter category as devalued beings unless or until they assimilate to mainstream cultural practices. Thus, well-intentioned therorizing has largely been enacted as gesturing in educational practice, eluding the philosophical underpinnings of inclusivity.

Thinking back to my time in the EMS school community, we were just beginning to digest the idea that our school community had been asking a new and growing majority of (non-White) students to leave their "home identities" at the entrance to our school building. At first, the focus of school-initiated change tended to lean towards logistics; teachers and administrators wrestled with how to be inclusive of students' backgrounds while maintaining a sense of order in the school. Many teachers expressed understandable incredulity over unfamiliar behaviors they witnessed by some of the students, like writing on bathroom walls, drawing gang symbols on homework papers, wearing a belt and letting it hang long on one side, allowing a fingernail to grow long, or shaving off lines of hair in one's eyebrows or sideburns. They wondered aloud, "Is this the type of cultural behavior we're supposed to support? Once innocuous issues, like students' wardrobe, became the central foci of disciplinary action when gang-related activity seeped into the community. At one point, an announcement was made that students could no longer wear blue or red to school, as it had been discovered that these were colors being worn to claim allegiance to two local gangs. Insufficient efforts were made to anticipate and educate school faculty on gang origins, signs, activities, and affiliations. The amalgamation of teachers' ignorance, fear, and misunderstandings about

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gangs combined with their relative power over students led to unfortunate consequences for the students, as well as the larger community. Students who were suspended or expelled from school for what was deemed "gang related activity" missed out on opportunities to be in school, which sent disgruntled adolescents into the community during the school day.

Informal conversations between my colleagues further revealed the mounting frustrations that teachers experienced in trying to meet policy expectations in the midst of rapid cultural and political changes. The focus and outcome of discussions tended to position minority students in deficit-based roles. These assumptions and assessments of Latino immigrant children contributed to a discourse of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and ultimately, how students envisioned themselves as learners in school.

Incidents of racial profiling amongst students, most often towards Black and Brown boys, also surfaced. In one instance, I witnessed a group of Black boys standing and talking together in the commons area of our school; it was before-school hours, during a time when students had free time to go to their lockers, get ready for classes, eat breakfast, and socialize with friends. I observed a White teacher who was assigned to serve "hall duty" in that vicinity, interrupt the boys' jovial conversation: "Hey, get moving!" I remember being surprised by the confrontation, so I slowed down my pace to observe a bit more closely. As a group, the boys slowly began moving away from her, but mostly continued to engage with one another. Making an upward sweeping motion with her hands, the teacher followed closely behind the boys yelling, "Let's go! Come on, you can move faster than that!" At this, one of the boys in the group asked, "What's the

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problem? We just congregatin'!" With a burning red face, the teacher quickly retorted, "Well, go congregate somewhere else!" and the boys walked away, shaking their heads.

Another instance of profiling occurred directly outside my classroom. Across the hallway from the ESL Room were student restrooms, which had come to be known as "the ESL bathrooms", as it was common to see the ESL students hanging out together in front of them. One afternoon during a passing period, I watched as the principal charged into the ESL bathroom, where he discovered five Latino boys…fixing their hair. I later learned that a veteran, female teacher had witnessed the group gather around one boy's locker, place an unidentified object into one of their pockets, and then go into the bathroom together. Since she couldn't follow the students into an opposite sex bathroom, she called the office to report "suspicious behavior" by some boys in the ESL bathroom. The principal happened to be nearby, so he took it upon himself to investigate the situation, only to find that the boys' concealed object was hair gel. As a new teacher still trying to acclimate and make sense of the school culture, I was quietly troubled by the actions of my colleagues. I wondered if they would've felt threatened or suspicious of groups of White boys participating in similar social behaviors.

Three of the five boys in the aforementioned anecdote routinely came to my classroom to eat lunch. In their adolescent ways, they continued to complain and joke about the incident, even weeks after it had happened. It was unsettling for me to hear their grievances because I knew it wasn't an isolated incident. I thought the students were justified in taking offense, but I didn't want to create any further rifts between them and the teachers, so I tried to remain diplomatic in my discussions with them. In an attempt to offer the students a chance to channel their negative thoughts and feelings

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about the incident into something creative, I convinced them to work on a 'poem for two

voices'[1] with me to help describe the experience.

No Good

A Poem for Two Voices

Student Voice	Teacher Voice
We boys gathered around our lockers.	The boys gathered around their lockers.
Mario was telling us about the new gel his Mami bought for him. *Muy caro.* We all wanted to try it out.	
	I watched them closely as they ganged up in a huddle and could tell they were up to no good.
	I kept watching and then I saw one boy put something--
	--I couldn't tell what it was--
I put the hair gel	
in my pocket.	in his pocket.
The girls would be meeting us soon,	
And so we rushed into the bathroom. bathroom!	Then I saw them rush into the
	Immediately, I alerted the office.
We were looking good - *caliente*.	
But then,	Finally,
The principal came in	The principal went in.

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[1] A 'poem for two voices' is written for two people to read aloud simultaneously. Each voice represents a different perspective of the same event. The poem is formatted so that the two readers recite their respective parts, reading aloud when words are on the line, and remaining silent when the line is left empty.

and asked us what we were doing.
We showed him the hair gel,
but he looked mad.
He made us empty our pockets
and then told us to get to class.

He told me

It was just hair gel!   it was just hair gel,

Why they always be thinking we're   But I still suspect they were up to

No good?   No good!

(Greene, 2008-2009)

I didn't realize it at the time, but this was one of the initial school experiences that

prompted me to begin conceptualizing literacy acts as means of social critique and

identity claiming.

History of Bias in Schools

      While it is generally recognized that inequities exist in society, the undertones of

colonialist structure that exist in the U.S. educational system can be more oblique. Some

argue that U.S. public schools serve as factory-like systems of racial bias shrouded under

the auspices of equality. Samuel Bowles (1972) criticized the insidious nature of U.S.

social class inequalities within the educational system, exposing its intent to tame the

underclass in the name of capitalism and democracy. He points to the shift from colonial

pre-capitalist society, in which families claimed authority over socialization and

production, to the current capitalist society, in which workers trade their autonomy for

wages, as critical in understanding the role of schooling in capitalist society.

> The social relations of the school would replicate the social relations of the
> workplace, and thus help young people adapt to the social division of labour.
> Schools would further lead people to accept the authority of the state and its
> agents – the teachers – at a young age, in part by fostering the illusion of the

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benevolence of the government in its relations with citizens. *Moreover, because schooling would ostensibly be open to all, one's position in the social division of labour could be portrayed as the result not of birth, but of one's own efforts and talents. And if the children's everyday experiences with the structure of schooling were insufficient to inculcate the correct views and attitudes, the curriculum itself would be made to embody the bourgeois ideology* (Bowles, 1972, p. 30 italics added).

Giroux (2001) concurs that schools are institutions of social reproduction, whose goal is to create a mass of passive laborers, thereby reinforcing and securing existing power structures through a hidden curriculum of schooling.

Herein lays some of the logic behind the inequitable systemic bias woven throughout today's educational institutions. Compulsory public education is arguably our culture's greatest socializing force, with the authority to empower or oppress, to unite or segregate. Educators, then, have a moral obligation to acknowledge and critically analyze this systemic power and the subsequent role that Education will play within society. This means examining the pedagogy for how leaders within institutions of learning respond to educating those students who are most vulnerable. On a more local level, this includes a call for teachers to become critical researchers of their own classroom practices.

Cultural Brokering

Approximately half of my duties as an ESL Teacher were devoted to a sort of cultural brokering; that is, outside of the curriculum and instruction I was responsible for delivering in my own classroom, it was necessary for me to either formally or informally act as a coach to content-area teachers in order to develop their own skills in working with immigrant students and English language learners. This necessary and challenging work contributed to my positionality within the context of the study.

Veteran teachers at EMS had become accustomed to and skilled at teaching within, largely, White, suburban demographics. During the 1996-97 school year, the 898 students at EMS were 76.9% White, 17.5% Black, 1.3% Hispanic and 11.5% free/reduced lunch. Just over a decade later, EMS served 1470 students; 41.4% White, 44.3% Black, 6.4% Hispanic and 42.3% free/reduced lunch. With dramatic demographic shifts to, what the state defined as "urban fringe," many teachers expressed initial fascination with the surface-level cultural novelties of immigrant students; food, fashion, festivals, and famous people were recurring themes in assigned work. As the novelty wore off for teachers and as immigrant students grew weary of tokenism, tensions began to rise. Some teachers expressed outward resistance to mandatory diversity trainings, which aimed to inform White teachers how to better understand the learning and school needs of Black and Brown students. One after-school staff meeting with a "diversity expert" offers an example of the tension: a White female teacher stood up and announced her irritation with the meeting agenda. "This is such a waste of time," she huffed angrily. "I don't know why I have to sit here and listen to this—I already know what it feels like to be a minority. Just last month, my husband and I came out of a downtown restaurant during [the city's African American festival] and we were the ***only*** White people on the street." When it came to understanding the perspectives of people of color, the learning curve was high. Set within a politically and socially conservative state and city, anti-immigrant rhetoric was commonplace and extended into the school setting, primarily in insidious ways. Acting as an advocate on immigrant students' behalf required diplomatic negotiating in nearly every interaction I encountered with content-area teachers.

Moreover, our school had become used to a programmatic model set by Special Education, a much better funded program with a long history and numerous legal supports, as well as human resources in place. There were approximately 150 students identified as English language learners in our building, spread across three grade levels and 15+ content area teachers. I was the only certified teacher in the building with ESL licensure and, while the ESL Instructional Assistant was knowledgeable, bilingual, and resourceful, she was only granted part-time hours by the school district. Without prior or adequate training in language learning and instruction, many content-area teachers were inclined to offer the same instructional modifications to English language learners that were offered to students in the Special Education program. Most often, this included extended time and/or less work.

Again, an anecdote helps to illustrate the cultural brokering process that became an expectation of my teacher role, albeit outside the formal job description. About midway through the year, the Social Studies teacher contacted me about Giddiani, a second-generation, Mexican American English learner. She was concerned about his failing midterm grade and his behavior; he would often "interrupt the group learning environment with his talking." It was so striking to me that a student who, earlier in the week, had initiated a class discussion about NAFTA negotiations could be failing Social Studies. When I approached Giddiani to discuss his failing grade, he sophomorically retorted, "Man, that teacher's racist!" I accepted the teacher's invitation to observe him in her class in order to assess his behavior and offer suggestions for him to improve his grades.

In the Social Studies classroom, approximately 40 students' desks were arranged in rows facing an overhead projector and screen; nearly all the seats were filled. Giddiani was seated towards the back of the room. I positioned myself in the back corner, opposite of where Giddiani was seated. There were other English language learners in the room, so I don't believe Giddiani knew I was there to observe him. The teacher was giving a lecture on geographic landforms. She sat in a stool at the front of the room and referenced her prepared notes on the overhead projector. Students were instructed to look at her notes, which included hand-drawn pictures of the landforms, their corresponding names, and their definitions, and copy all the information into their notebooks. She read each term and its definition aloud to the class, stopping every so often to redirect students who were off-task and remind the class that these notes would help them study for the upcoming test.

One of the terms in the lesson was "mesa." As the teacher was reading the definition, Giddiani blurted out, "That's table!" recognizing that "*mesa*" is the Spanish word for "*table.*" The teacher let out an audible sigh of irritation and glanced at me, as if to signal that this was representative of Giddiani's disruptive behavior. I wanted to support Giddiani's eagerness in sharing his knowledge of his native Spanish language without allowing the teacher to lose face. I directed my attention to Giddiani and said, "That's a great connection, Giddiani! 'Mesa' means 'table' in Spanish and that landform looks like a table -- that's probably how it got its name. Maybe next time you could raise your hand to let your teacher know that you have something important to share." The teacher gave me an awkward smile and quickly moved on with the lecture. After class, the teacher expressed to me that she was genuinely interested in helping the ESL

students, but she couldn't accept outbursts during class time. She sounded frustrated as she detailed the ways she had tried to help the ESL students by allowing them to copy her notes directly from the teachers' book, as opposed to the overhead screen, and by giving them extra time to complete their tests--both standard accommodations made for students in Special Education. "All they have to do is copy the notes! How hard can that be?" I concurred that it probably wasn't too difficult a task for them, but then probed further, "What do you want them to *know* at the end of the lesson?" "Well, I want them to understand the vocabulary…" She paused, and then as if realizing aloud, "Oh no…If English is new to them, then they're copying words that are unfamiliar to them…and that means that copying the notes isn't helping them to understand..." I asked if she had Giddiani's Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) on hand. As she pulled it out of a desk drawer, she admitted that she felt too overwhelmed to know what was in his ILP, as one-third of her students had IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans mandated through Special Education) and another third of her students now had ILPs. I sympathized and, then, suggested that the ILP paperwork could simply serve as a starting place to help us begin a conversation about the best strategies to help students reach their potential. I showed her a bar graph which indicated Giddiani's relative strength in the speaking domain of English as compared to the other domains (reading, writing, and listening) in which he was still developing his English proficiency. This helped to explain Giddiani's vocal participation in class. From there, we were able to begin planning together; we created adaptations to her existing lessons that included a better balance of all four language domains. The teacher gradually came to realize how much more effective her lessons were with respect to overall student engagement and knowledge acquisition when

taking language-based elements into consideration. Eventually, we scheduled regular times after school to meet and develop further adaptations to instruction and assessment that drew from students' prior background knowledge, helping to scaffold their learning.

While this example offers a relative success story of cultural brokering and coaching, not all collegial relationships allowed for this kind of collaboration.   More often than I'd prefer to remember, I felt unwelcomed into content-area classrooms. I sensed that my presence as a new teacher entering into veteran teachers' classrooms with new knowledge and suggestions for improvement was interpreted as threatening to their years of professional experience. Thus, instead of solely relying on inviting myself into classrooms, the ESL Director and I collaborated to create and teach a semester-long course for practicing educators to learn more about culturally responsive teaching as it relates to English language learners. The class offered a theoretical framework for understanding language development and acquisition; addressed acculturation and social, political and economic circumstances for immigration in the state; and highlighted instructional and assessment strategies aimed at English language learners. We were able to secure grant funding and partner with local universities to offer the course for twelve consecutive semesters (fall, spring, and summer) at no cost to teachers. In this way, we brokered a way for teachers to initiate their own learning, with incentives to add to their mandatory continuing education hours and/or professional growth plans.

Age of Accountability

The discourse around teacher accountability, as written into the U.S. educational policy No Child Left Behind Act (USDOE, 2001), uses students' standardized test scores as the measure for adequate yearly progress, or AYP, a system of grading the

performance of students, teachers and schools. The stakes for test performance are high;

if a school does not meet AYP, it risks government-imposed restructuring and loss of

funding. Under the guise of 'scientifically-based research' and "right-wing common

sense"(Kumashiro, 2008), these measures seem logical, even praise-worthy. NCLB

legislation and its accompanying policies, however, have received harsh criticism for the

ways pedagogical practices are oversimplified, emphasizing standardized tests over

democratic teaching principles (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006); the inappropriateness of

a neoliberal business-model applied to education (Torres, 2005); and the reinforcement of

systemic racial bias (Leonardo, 2007).

One year, the State Department of Education decided that its public schools need

to administer the state standardized exam twice, once each semester, as a transition to

moving it from Fall to Spring semester.   Additionally, my school had been selected as a

pilot for quarterly Acuity Testing, a form of computer-based, common assessment

rumored to eventually take the place of the state standardized exam. Language minority

students were further required to take the annual LAS-Links English language

proficiency exam to monitor their progress in learning English. All told, my English

language learner students were required to take seven standardized tests during one

academic year, leaving only two months (November and December, also months during

which Thanksgiving and Winter break were scheduled) without testing; in effect, further

fueling the existing racial disparities with less instructional time. Yet, a paradox exists

with respect to mandated standardized testing as it relates to English language learners.

Testing mandates, while flawed and unfair, help to protect English language learners and

undocumented immigrant students to the extent that they force schools and teachers to

consider these individuals as their own students. Before the law, some English language learners were being excluded from standardized testing, both to shield the student from the stress and unrealistic expectations of testing well in a non-native language, as well as to protect the school from reporting poor test scores.

In many ways, then, teachers and schools have been charged with the difficult task of working within and against the same system. While democratic teaching practices advocate for students' agency, teachers know that, within the current educational landscape, passing scores on standardized tests equate to greater access to educational and employment opportunities for students, not to mention teachers' own job security.

On one occasion, for example, an eighth-grade teacher escorted a Latino English language learner to my classroom, interrupting my teaching (and presumably, abandoning her own classroom of students), in order to scold him in front of me. Presumably, she wanted to make sure she had clearly communicated her intended message: he needed to make up missing homework assignments. Her chosen tone and words, however, conveyed a more discouraging message: "You really need to start acting more responsibly and stop being so lazy! I don't see how you're going to end up anywhere but homeless and living on the streets." More commonly, teachers and administrators who were outwardly well-intentioned and sympathetic would reference English as a Second Language (ESL) or English language learner (Ell) students using a term coined by the state - "LEP" or limited English proficiency - as opposed to acknowledging students Spanish (or other language) dominance or potential bilingualism. The rhetoric embedded throughout fails to recognize the myriad funds of knowledge (L. Moll & Gonzalez, 1994)

the students and their families possess, leaving immigrant student voices and perspectives out of the conversation, either silenced or unheard.

Especially during periods of "accountability" when teachers and schools are evaluated based upon the outcomes of standardized test scores, the motives for teacher-led research have been called into question. The politically motivated "common sense" attacks on U.S. public schools (Kumashiro, 2008) necessitate a counter-narrative. When the term "research-based" is equated with quantitative methods, significant data sets are left unexamined.

Social climates can be slow to change. Glimpses of progressive instruction and assessment offered to English language learners were present, but the repressive systemic barriers to English language learners' success were overwhelming in comparison. The enrollment of English language learners continued to increase even as state administrators built stronger hierarchical structures to standardize curriculum and institute greater testing measures as a means for holding teachers accountable. Within this context, I chose to deliver student-led, inquiry-based, English language instruction somewhat surreptitiously.

The study I designed uses qualitative methods of practitioner research to explore the ways that immigrant adolescents express their identity constructions and claims through literacy learning in a sheltered ESL classroom driven by inquiry. The main research question examined ***what happens when adolescent English language learners are positioned as significant contributors to their literacy curriculum?*** Collected data sets included instructional artifacts, student work samples, student interviews,

observational field notes and written reflections taken by me, the teacher-researcher. Narrative analysis was used to look for emerging themes of immigrant student identity claims and constructions.

Organization of the book

This book is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides some background with respect to the political landscape of the study, as well as an overview of the local study site and my role in it. Chapter 2 describes the early stages of my professional journey with racial consciousness and practitioner research, including the developing concept of a third-space-imagined-community. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 detail and analyze three respective data sets: those of students' collective sensemaking through class discussions, those of individual students' formal written work, and those of students' reflections upon the year-long inquiry. Chapter 6 synthesizes and analyzes the three data sets and discusses implications for teaching practice and policy.

Chapter 2: Invitation to Consciousness

I came to practitioner research rather organically. Some of the traditional methods of language teaching that I used in my first few years of teaching weren't working as comprehensibly as anticipated. Gradually, I began to explore and document inquiry-based methods of teaching and learning. In general, I found that students' interest and engagement during in-class activities increased. Similarly, I felt more engaged and in-tune with my students' individual learning needs. Inquiry-based methods allowed us to work collaboratively, a stylistic preference perhaps best suited to my students who predominantly came from cultures that value communalism over individualism. The passage which led me to practitioner research, however, began with an invitation to better understand myself as a racial being.

A recurring series of questions has been regularly asked of me for as long as I can remember: "What are you?" or "Where are you from?" have offered evidence to me that my physical appearance is challenging to identify, and perhaps, challenges some people's ability to identify *with* me. These are not easy questions to answer, mainly because the people posing these questions to me aren't always clear about what curiosity they're attempting to satisfy. I have been used to providing one of three responses: 1) Ethnically, I am half-Chinese and half-Caucasian – racially mixed, some would say. 2) Nationally, I am a third-generation Chinese American. 3) Culturally, I am White; I was raised in the Midwestern United States, in predominantly White, middle to upper-middle class, suburban neighborhoods and so I most closely identify with dominant, White cultural norms. English is my native language and any other languages or parts of languages I've learned have been through formal, public school foreign language instruction or travel.

I've found that the reactions of inquirers range from fascination of my "exotic physical features" to disappointment that my story doesn't include whatever is was they were anticipating or wanting to hear. Importantly, I have spent the majority of my life in environments in which I represent a racial minority. I can recall a handful of times, however, when I experienced a sense of racially blending in. During the summers of 1999 and 2000, for example, I spent time volunteering in a post-disaster Nicaraguan village. Many of the people native to the region assumed that I was Latina, perhaps because my almond-shaped eyes and summertime tan more closely resembled their eyes and skin tone than those of my fellow North American volunteers, all of whom were Caucasian/White. Similarly, a holiday vacation on the island of Maui offered a refreshing sense of racial affinity for me; the high population of Hapas[2] gave a mirror-like illusion of my own phenotype, as if strangers were constantly reflecting me. It was the first time I experienced what it must be like to be part of the dominant race and culture.

My racial and cultural identity claims have gone through numerous iterations and will continue to evolve over time and circumstance (Philip, 2007), but at the beginning of this study, I had not spent a considerable amount of time studying or thinking about how my race affected me and my professional relationships outside of the aforementioned inquisitiveness of strangers and short-term overseas excursions.

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[2] Hapa is a term used to describe people of mixed ethnic heritage, usually people who are partially of Asian/Pacific Island descent.

Racial Consciousness Raising

During the academic years 2007-2009, Pacific Educational Group (PEG)[3] was

hired by my school district to implement district-wide programming aimed at supporting

teachers and administrators as they engaged in "Courageous Conversations About Race"

(Singleton & Linton, 2006) and systemic transformation based upon an understanding of

institutionalized racism and its impact on student learning. Invited to these sessions were

approximately 100 teachers and administrators across the school district who had agreed

to be part an Equity Team[4] in their respective school buildings. Every Equity Team

intentionally included White and Black educators as participants; some teams

additionally had Asian or Latino/Hispanic as participants. As an invitee, I attended all of

their "train-the-trainer" sessions, hosted by my school district and led by PEG facilitators.

Each member of the Equity team was expected to fulfill three main responsibilities, as

outlined in <u>Courageous Conversations About Race</u> (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 231):

1) Engage in a process of investigation to discover how race impacts one's personal and professional attitudes and behaviors.
2) Lead the school or central office staff in the examination of individual and institutional culture as it relates to equity and anti-racism.
3) Establish a professional learning community in which adults can effectively develop skills and knowledge necessary to improve student performance and eliminate racial achievement disparities.

My formal role at EMS, thus, was multi-faceted; at once, I served as a teacher, a

researcher, and an Equity Team member.

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[3] Pacific Educational Group is an organization whose purpose is to "transform educational systems into racially conscious and socially just environments" (Singleton, 2010).

[4] Equity Teams, as defined by PEG, are groups of "emerging leaders who wish to develop their will, skill, knowledge, and capacity necessary to support their colleagues in understanding race and deinstitutionalizing racism."

In one training session, we were led through an exercise called *The Color Line*, a reference to W.E.B. Du Bois' frequent use of the phrase. Participants began by individually completing an inventory based off Peggy Mcintosh's article, *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1988). In the article, Mcintosh states 26 conditions, descriptive of some of the hidden privileges to which she has access as a result of her racial Whiteness. For example, *"When I am told about our national heritage or 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my race made it what it is."* or *"I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race."* As participants, we were instructed to read each statement, think about how it resonated with our own individual experience, and then score it using a Likert scale. Participants were instructed to score each statement they felt was "often true" for them as a five; "sometimes true" as a three; and "seldom true" as a zero. Next, we were instructed to total our points, write down our score and wear it around our necks, and then arrange ourselves into a number line from highest to lowest.

Once everyone was in place, it was immediately clear why the exercise was called *The Color Line*, as our chronological inventory scores created a perfect spectrum of light-skinned to dark-skinned participants. The illustration was striking to me beyond the implications and evidence of systemic bias that the exercise intended to reveal. Besides me, there was one other Asian American participant, and we were both neatly situated in-between our White/Caucasian colleagues and our Brown/Latino colleagues and Black/African American colleagues. As I began to personalize what this meant for me as an Asian American, I felt a complex sense of affinity and distance from my non-Asian colleagues – White enough to be in close proximity to privilege, but not White enough to

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embody the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) of Whiteness; colored enough to experience some of the hidden privileges denied to people of color, but not colored enough to have a legitimate platform for any personal grievance.

Opportunities for conversations followed and I was excited to have a safe forum to discuss the personally relevant issue of race. As I shared, my thoughts from *The Color Line* were confirmed – my racial experiences did not fully resonate with those of my colleagues. As an Asian American, I was perceived by my Black colleagues to have more access to dominant culture/Whiteness than they did, perhaps as a result of assimilation and compliance. My White colleagues seemed to dismiss my experiential claims in ways they considered to be additive. For example, one [White] colleague said to me, "I don't think of you as Asian American; I think of you as White." Despite this invitational inclusion as an honorary White, its explicit mention was surprising to me, leading me to question the genuineness of the statement. My phenotype was/is clearly Asian, I identified as Asian American, and I clearly stated this in the Equity Team meetings. The explicit inclusion as "White" seemed to implicitly exclude my Black colleagues, while still situating me as a guest in the White community. I wondered, if I were positioned as White amongst my colleagues, did sharing my personal experiences with racial bias insult my African American colleagues? If I claimed a non-White identity, was I considered an imposter? These seemingly forced choices were not palatable nor accurately representative of my Asian American identity.

Because my own racialized experience didn't quite fit the dominant narratives that fell along the Black-White binary, I largely felt excluded from the district-sanctioned conversations that followed that year. Instead, I found affinity and legitimization of my

experiences in private conversations with my mentor and friend, a third-generation

Japanese American, who worked as an administrator in the district. Ongoing discussions

with her helped (and continue to help) me better understand my racialized positionality

within my professional setting. More than once, we reflected upon our physical location

on The Color Line. The exercise helped me articulate some tensions I was struggling with

concerning *access* and *assimilation*. I wondered how much access to privilege I had

received because I had assimilated to dominant norms. How much had I been taught

(consciously or subconsciously) to push aside my Asian heritage and cultural ways of

knowing in order to be accepted and gain access to success in the dominant US culture?

Were there ways in which I was not assimilated enough to be fully accepted and viewed

as legitimate?

　　　　Later that same week, I received a surprise visit at school from two former

students: Marco and Ivan. Some background will help to contextualize the significance

of the visit. Both boys were first-generation immigrants from Mexico whose parents had

sacrificed immensely in order to give their children an opportunity to attend school in the

United States. Marco had been expelled from school as an eighth grader, along with four

other boys, for gang-related activity. As his ESL Teacher of three years, I knew him to

be a bright and capable student. I felt he had made some poor choices in friends and was

highly emotional and impressionable, like many of his adolescent peers. Still, I strongly

disagreed with the school's decision to expel Marco and defended this position to

administration. I thought Marco could make academic and behavioral improvements in

the absence of the other expelled students' negative influences; denying him access to

schooling for the rest of the year did not seem like the most productive or appropriate

disciplinary action. My plea was respectfully dismissed. The following school year, I

received reports from the high school that Marco had dropped out of school.

The other former student visitor, Ivan, had graduated from eighth grade in good

standing. I first met Ivan when he registered for middle school as a sixth-grader. It was

his third day in the United States and he displayed a friendly, humble, and quiet

demeanor. Within one year of middle school, his English language proficiency had

developed from a Level 1 (beginner level) to a Level 4 (advanced level). He had a strong

sense of discipline toward schoolwork, earned good grades on his report cards, and

became a leader amongst his social peers. While he was my student, Ivan would

routinely discuss his personal/home-life concerns with me, like when his parents were in

the process of divorcing and his relationship with his father was becoming increasingly

strained; I witnessed a glimpse of this struggle during a student-led conference, when

Ivan's father berated him in front of me. After Ivan graduated from middle school, I

received informal reports from his high school indicating that halfway through his first

year in high school, he had moved back to Mexico and his attendance had been sporadic

up to that point. Because of that report, I was pleasantly surprised by his visit.

During the visit, the boys and I sat together in the foyer area of the school. I

inquired about how and what they were doing. Marco proudly shared that he and his

girlfriend had a one-year-old son together and were soon to be married. When they

learned that they were pregnant, he decided to drop out of high school and start his own

construction business. I recalled that, during his expulsion from middle school, Marco

began working construction with his father. Building on his family's funds of knowledge

(L. C. Moll & Gonzalez, 1997), more specifically, the skills and business acumen he had

learned from his father, he could financially provide for his new family. I expressed my excitement for him and his future, and told him that I was very proud of him.

Ivan relayed his update with less enthusiasm than his friend. After his parents' divorce, Ivan lived with his father, who began drinking heavily and later kicked him out of the house. Ivan moved back to Mexico to live with his grandmother for a brief period, and then returned to the U.S. to take a job that his brother-in-law had found for him. Ivan shared that he wanted to go back to school, but needed to work in order to pay for rent and food. I knew that our district offered an alternative high school program with flexible hours, so I offered to help him get enrolled if he was interested. Hearing this, Marco frowned, and in a scolding tone spoke to Ivan in their native Spanish, "Why would you want to go to school? You have a job and can make more money! You don't need school!" Ivan lowered his head and shrugged his shoulders. I offered, "You know, school isn't for everyone, but school is something that you do well, Ivan. I think you would increase your chances of finding a higher-paying job if you graduated from high-school." Ivan nodded, acknowledging what I had said, and then added, "I know this, but it will be hard."

Marco was visibly agitated by our conversation; he stood up and paced the floor, breathing heavily. This was a typical coping mechanism for Marco when he was trying to 'cool off' in instances when he felt angry or frustrated. Knowing this, I allowed him some time to pace and gather himself. Ivan seemed to temporarily direct his attention away from Marco as well, as he continued to ask me questions about the alternative high school program. Abruptly, Marco interrupted our conversation in a burst of anger, directed at me. "You know, we don't have to dress like you and act like you to do well in

our lives. Look at me--I'm doing fine without school. I have my own business and I can take care of my family!"

His words pierced my conscience, as I remembered *The Color Line* exercise. Marco was challenging my own deeply held assumptions of Whiteness, privilege, and what it meant to be successful. From his perspective, I had obtained access to privilege, presumably through the ways I embodied the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). With little warning, the events surrounding Marco's expulsion flooded my mind and I felt overwhelmed with guilt. Even though I had attempted to "save him" from expulsion, I remained complicit as a participant in the larger system of bias. Marco was keenly aware of the rankings on *The Color Line* and was able to articulate the ways that he has resisted and overcome their inequities. His words gave me significant pause, leaving me in a state of moral and intellectual paralysis. Through this critical incident, Marco helped to disrupt my consciousness; his words raised my awareness of the ways I had access to privilege, and how I may not have been paying enough attention to systemic inequities. Had I been teaching, encouraging, indeed, expecting my students to assimilate into the dominant culture? Was it morally unethical *not* to teach students to take on aspects of the dominant culture and did that thereby deny them access to success? What assumptions was I making about how 'success' gets defined? What assumptions was I making by believing that some degree of assimilation was prerequisite for success? How could I be more mindful of students' heritages and cultural ways of knowing, and use those as *assets* instead of deficits in guiding them towards *their* ideas of what it means to be successful? Experiences like these helped me to reconsider my teaching role as a racialized being and the unintended consequences it may provoke.

Along with my evolving awareness and racial identity development, I began to develop greater understanding and compassion for my Black and White colleagues. I began to notice ways that their racialized experiences, identities, and positionalities within the professional setting seemed more clearly defined than my own. Within the school culture, there was little ambiguity about who could identify as a person of color (myself excluded), who could initiate conversations about race, and who could best identify with students of color. When Black educators were given legitimate platform to voice their insights on race, they were generally received with genuine, but distanced interest, quickly followed by discomfort, and eventually, annoyance. The narratives of Black colleagues appeared to be instructive to the extent that they were convenient; once state and district-wide directives began shifting leadership roles, the personal significance of race was displaced by narrowed efforts to close the racial achievement gap by increased testing and data measurement. Beyond that, the personal truths told by Black colleagues seemed to serve as burdens on collective White guilt -- too different from the dominant norms of school culture to justify the work of individual change, especially under the weight of the larger, recognized system of bias.

Through all of these organizational and emotional shifts, I found myself navigating the role of conversational interlocutor (Ramanathan, 2006) between my White and Black colleagues and my Brown students/families, as if back on The Color Line. This invitation to represent and sometimes reconcile the beliefs of both Whites and people of color was unexpected, if not awkward, but highly instructive for me in better understanding my colleague's attitudes towards students who came from cultures that differed from their own. Largely, teachers expressed genuinely altruistic intentions in

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their attempts to serve historically marginalized students, but when their hard work produced less-than-desired results in the midst of undermined efforts, frustrations predictably mounted, often to the detriment of *all* students.

Entre into Practitioner Research

My knowledge about practitioner inquiry was instigated as I commenced studies in a doctoral program focused on literacy, culture, and language education. During my first semester as a doctoral student, I had the fortune of learning from my advisor, Gerald Campano, whose work with immigrant children's literacy development (Campano, 2007) offered legitimacy and guidance to my own inclinations about teaching as a practice. The experience served as a springboard to develop my working knowledge of practitioner research with respect to curriculum development (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Chio & Fandt, 2007; Hubbard & Power, 2003; Penuel & Freeman, 1997; Trueba, 1999); ethnographic research in education (Clandinin & Connelly; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kincheloe, 2003; May, 2003; McKernan, 1996; Woods, 1996) ; and ethical issues of qualitative research (Clandinin, 2006; Josselson, 2007; Zeni, 2001).

While practitioner research is not a novel concept in the scholarly literature, is it seldom acknowledged as a legitimate form of practice in classrooms. In my school context, for example, there seemed to be differing understandings and goals of practitioner research, which left me feeling isolated within my school community. I can recall an early fall staff meeting in which the building principal requested for all teachers to conduct action research in their classrooms as a form of professional development. Teachers were offered a cursory explanation of action research, which included a few examples of collecting students' pre- and post-test scores or grades before and after the

implementation of a given curricular approach. At the time that this request was made, I had already begun a small scale student engagement survey with my students. My building principal knew about this study, and asked me to present my process and preliminary findings at a staff meeting later that semester. By the time that staff meeting came along, however, the principal had abandoned the action research request he had made of teachers and I was told I wouldn't need to present my work after all. The professional development focus would be shifting to DuFour's model of (Dufour & Baker, 1988) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in lieu of teacher action research.

It was explained to me that PLCs would encourage more collaboration amongst teachers, while still allowing for action research on an individual and collective scale. This sounded promising to me, as I had been working to build collaborative working relationships with content-area teachers who served ESL students over the prior five years. Most often, this work included meeting informally in between classes, during prep periods, and during non-school hours. The sense of collegiality during that time increased and overall ESL students' academic work had improved. I imagined that PLCs would allow more opportunities for this type of collaboration through a structured format, adding a layer of encouragement and legitimacy to the work in which we were already engaging.

Soon after these building-level shifts in professional development were announced, major state, district and building-level administrative changes were made, including but not limited to several teachers being reassigned to different schools and/or teams of students. The change in work climate was palpable. Behind closed doors,

teachers quietly discussed their shock, confusion, and outrage over some of the state-level directives being made. Numerous teachers and administrators were unwillingly reassigned or demoted without notice or explanation, while others felt forced to leave their positions due to unfavorable conditions. An excerpt from my journal reads: "It feels as though we are in a sort of professional survival-mode, with changes happening so quickly that it seems impossible to anticipate what will happen next. It's as if we've stepped into an Orwellian society of policy and decision-making." Along with these drastic and unexpected shifts, I found it more challenging to forge new collaborative relationships, as newly assigned teachers expressed feeling overwhelmed with myriad other changes and requirements added to their duties without the addition of more support in the way of collegial guidance, time, or pay. The Equity Team's "courageous conversations about race" were still present, but their appearance dramatically shifted from generative, spontaneous, and reflective exchanges to sparsely attended Q&A –style book clubs. Increasingly, curricular conversations and decisions focused less on inclusiveness for all and more on the Black-White binary of student achievement and disparity.

In the years that followed, I found solace in graduate studies, which offered explanations and historical contexts for the educational shifts I witnessed. I read the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, pp. 47-59), who note that practitioner research and PLCs are movements that share several important features for school improvement. Both movements focus on building communities of collectivity, collaboration, and transparency for improving the processes of teaching and learning; the use of multiple forms of data to discuss and interpret teaching and learning outcomes are employed; an

equity agenda which targets improvement for marginalized groups of students is identified as a central motivation for improvement. Guiding principles for effectiveness include reflective professional inquiry within a particular school culture of "norms, expectations, relationships, and layers of history that mediate and shape teachers' interpretive frameworks, practices, and strategies"(2009, p. 53) .

Practitioner Inquiry and Professional Learning Communities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 53)

PRACTITIONER INQUIRY MOVEMENT:

Social movements

Means and ends

Teacher/student learning

data of practice

Multiple contexts for change

Equity-outside the Accountability frame

Inquiry

Data

Communities

Learning from data

Cultures of schools

Equity

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

School effects

Means to end

Best local practice

Assessment data

School is unit of change

Equity-inside the Accountability frame

Despite these overlapping features, the conceptualizations of professional development for school improvement through these two methods vary in historical roots, intentions, and thus, approach. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, pp. 53-55) cite the distinct research traditions from which these movements were born: practitioner research is closely tied to social movements, including those of critical inquiry and participatory

action research, while PLCs come from a sociological tradition of understanding organizational systems and structures of teachers' work.

Learning about these varied histories and approaches to school reform and equity helped me to better understand some of the professional tensions I was witnessing and experiencing in my teaching environment. The epistemology, methods, and politics presented in the PLCs of my local school context were defined in ways that often ran counter to my own intuitions, research, and preferred style of instruction. The weekly, mandatory PLC meetings, for example, focused heavily on outcomes-based models of learning (Stenhouse, 1975), namely, examining common assessment development and scoring within each discipline. Students' scores on these exams were used as one form of determining student achievement and were used an indication of each teacher's effectiveness as an instructor of the content.

Given the mandatory nature of PLC meetings, I assumed that my presence and input would be regarded equally with those of my peers. Early on, I was excited to share the work that my students and I were engaging – a process-inquiry model (Stenhouse, 1975) in which the developed curriculum was led by my students' interests. My contribution was mostly met with polite smiles, followed by apologetic expressions that process-teaching and learning was not feasible in their core-content area classrooms because it was too difficult to objectively measure. On one occasion, when a building leader inquired about our unit lesson plans for the upcoming months, I openly and naively stated that I did not write lesson plans months in advance; my pedagogy and lessons for language development were planned around the immediate needs and interests of my students on a day-to-day basis. The administrator flatly responded, "I didn't hear

you say that," indicating her willingness to turn a blind eye to my teaching approaches, even feigning ignorance, if necessary, to secure her own employment.

The underlying message was clear: since ESL was considered outside of the core content areas, my role in these PLC meetings was also considered outside the locus of welcomed contribution and, therefore, I was minimally included in discussions. The circumstances led me to seek and create alternative spaces for collaboration and professional development with my content-area colleagues outside of the sanctioned structures. Thus, hybrid spaces (Bakhtin, 1935) were formed in which dialogical and collaborative conversations between teachers were formed amidst the contested environment of standardization.

Developing and Refining Practice

My teaching philosophy evolved to include elements of critical theory. Teaching is a human act and democratic teaching practices assume that learning derives from curiosity (Freire, 1998b) and problem-based learning tasks. Relatedly, the authentic learning movement rests on the idea that "students' experiences in school should more closely resemble the experiences they encounter in real life" (Cronin, 1993). In my school setting, I knew of several teachers who were working to create problem-based lessons to more authentically engage their students. From what I could gather, however, 'authentic learning' was largely being defined by teachers' impressions of what was important or interesting to students. As an example, one fall semester, a teacher at my school developed some of her physics lessons around the theme of football and the problem of missed passes which led to game losses. The intent was to more actively engage students by tapping into their out-of-school interests. In hindsight, the teacher

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reflected that the topic did not engage as many students as she had hoped; she assumed that more students were knowledgeable about and interested in football. After much frustration, she sheepishly admitted one of her realizations with respect to a cultural assumption -- that her large population of Latino students heard her talking about *football* and thought she was talking about *futbol*, which in North American English is *soccer*. Many of her students were not familiar with the rules of North American football and the lesson in physics was completely lost on them.

Eventually, I was led to the writings of Third World, antiracist feminist, Chandra Mohanty. Her theorizing on equitable teaching and learning with students of color and students with histories of oppression helped to reconcile some of the pedagogical challenges I was wrestling with. She uses the descriptor 'Third World' to include not only peoples living in underdeveloped nations, but also all people of color in developed nations who can claim marginalization as part of their history. Of Education, she calls for "decoloniz[ing] our disciplinary and pedagogical practices…as a means of liberation and advancement for Third World and postcolonial peoples and their/our historical belief in education as a crucial form of resistance to the colonization of hearts and minds" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 200). This resonated with my altruistic intentions of "meeting students where they are" and not asking them to "leave parts of themselves at the schoolhouse door" (G. Howard, 1999).

Also influential to my thinking at the time was literature related to participatory action research. McKernan (1996, p. 15) identifies three typologies for action research: scientific action research, practical-deliberative action research, and critical-emancipatory action research. The first type, scientific action research, involves a traditional, empirical

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research approach to problem solving: identify a problem, create a hypothesis about how the problem can be ameliorated, develop and execute a plan, collect data, analyze date, and cite a conclusion. This description closely aligned with the research model presented to the teachers in my school when we were encouraged to conduct action research in our classrooms. The second type of action research described by McKernan, practical-deliberative action research, "trades off some measurement and control for human interpretation, interactive communication, deliberation, negotiation, and detailed description." The goal of practical action researchers is understanding practice and solving immediate problems," (McKernan, 1996, p. 20) a process which seemed to significantly overlap with constructivist frameworks that I had tried to model in my own teaching. Building on the practical-deliberative process, McKernan describes the third type of action research, critical-emancipatory action research, which positions the role of subjects as knowledge-holders and capable agents of change. This latter process piqued my interest, as it seemed to align with some of Mohanty's (2003) theoretical claims. I felt encouraged to explore ways that could promote students' positive language and cultural identity development.

"Real life" is relative to those who are experiencing it and, at any given moment, several realities can exist. At a minimum, there is the reality formed by dominant culture and the reality of those experiencing dominant culture. In a school classroom setting, the teacher inherently plays the role of authority figure and sets the social norms for the classroom culture. Each individual experiences reality uniquely, relative to myriad factors including race, socioeconomics, gender, culture, etc. Thus, what one considers to be 'authentic' is relative to how one experiences reality. Mohanty wrote that

"decolonizing pedagogical practices requires taking seriously the relation between

knowledge and learning, on the one hand, and student and teacher experience, on the

other….the theorization and politicization of experience is imperative if pedagogical

practices are to focus on more than the mere management, systematization, and

consumption of disciplinary knowledge" (2003, pp. 200-201).

Developing Methods for Practitioner Research at EMS

Zeni (2001) notes that the classroom context is the major distinguishing factor

that differentiates teacher research from more traditional forms of research. To

extrapolate, the classroom is like an evolving, living organism which acts and reacts

within its environment. The exact environmental conditions are rarely the same from day

to day, nor can they be reproduced with different people or at a different time. Thus, the

process of practitioner research required of me concerted, daily efforts at self-awareness

and reflection. In practice, this meant planning lessons for the following day based upon

the current day's findings, activities, and emerging questions. Additionally, I wrote

weekly reflective journals of my own experiences in the learning community.

My out-of-classroom studies also heavily contributed to my daily thinking and

methodology. As a doctoral student at the time, my guiding resources were rich and

mentally stimulating. The experience of playing the dual roles of student and teacher

made the connections between theory and practice more transparent for me. It allowed

me to reflect upon theoretical inquiry and gain clearer perspective for how to infuse it

into teaching practice. Most notably, I was given opportunities to read and explore the

ways that critical frameworks support and challenge the culturally relevant teaching

strategies (Gay, 2000; G. Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2005; Nieto, 1999; Tatum, 1997) that I had been learning about through my school district's continuing education seminars and trainings.

Both critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy share the value orientation that inequitable, systemic power paradigms exist within society; those inequities are unjust; and education can serve as a tool for empowerment and change. This epistemological overlap is evident in the foundational writings for critical and culturally relevant pedagogies.

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) is often cited as the seminal work for Critical Theory as it relates to culture and literacy. Freire claims that those who are oppressed within the margins of institutionalized bias can achieve liberation by learning to reflect the democratic process of understanding and responding to their world. Further, he contends that education is liberation when approached from a problem-posing stance, "the problems of human beings in their relations with the world" to expose reality (p. 79). Problem-posing education exists in direct opposition to what Freire calls the "banking concept," which reinforces the top-down power structure between teacher and student, and yields the teacher as a giver of knowledge and the student a blank receptacle awaiting deposits of knowledge. It requires mutuality and dialogue between student and teacher to investigate and create knowledge together. Leonardo (2004) echoes the spirit of Freire's problem-posing pedagogy as quality education with the "power to change the pedagogical process from one of knowledge transmission to knowledge transformation" (p. 11). The critical pedagogue works to transform the common discourse of how 'success' and 'failure' are defined because these academic labels are so closely tied to

students' identities of what they believe they can do, and therefore, contribute to their sustained sociopolitical positions as either 'the oppressed' or 'the liberated'. Numerous scholarly literature reveal and advocate for this philosophy of teaching through the lenses of critical literacy, epistemic privilege, and social activism (Bean & Moni, 2003; Campano, 2007; Cruz, 2008; Fernsten, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Mitchell, 2005; Moya, 2002; Reyes & Halcon, 2001).

Building on Freire's work, Henri Giroux has also contributed significantly to critical theory and pedagogy. Giroux challenges deterministic notions of cultural reproduction and offers a pedagogy of cultural politics that intersects knowledge and power "to give students the opportunity not only to understand more critically who they are as a part of a wider social formation, but also to help them critically appropriate those forms of knowledge that traditionally have been denied to them" (H. A. Giroux, 1988, p. 106). Like Freire, Giroux sought out the possibilities inherent in knowledge-power relationships, and advocated for these possibilities in creating democratic school learning environments.

Intersecting with the ideas of empowerment and democratic learning inherent in critical pedagogy are strong tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. Geneva Gay, one of the founding scholars of the theory, offers:

> The fundamental aim of culturally responsive pedagogy is to *empower* ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy. Knowledge in the form of curriculum content is central to this empowerment. To be effective, this knowledge must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school (Gay, 2000, p. 111).

With a strong emphasis on ethnic diversity, CRP's roots in Multicultural Education are particularly evident. As part of my role on the Equity Team, I was invited to read The Light In Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities (Nieto, 1999), which provided an inclusive overview of Multicultural Education and its role in schools; understanding the history of Multicultural Education helped me to understand the theoretical development of CRP and, thus, how critical frameworks challenge it. Historically, Multicultural Education focused on "celebrating diversity" through food, festivals, fashion, and famous people; or cultivating interethnic friendships. While there is value in these aspects of culture, they fall short of equitable learning environments for multicultural children when academic disparities continue to exist. Multicultural education models tend to ignore the learning responsibilities of the minority student, presuming that teacher and attitudes and practices alone will lead to better school success (Ogbu, 1992). Learning, Nieto attests, is more than a cognitive process; rather, it exists as part of a larger, sociocultural and sociopolitical context.

Honoring multicultural children in schools, then, is an issue of social equity. Educational inequalities are present in policy and curriculum; it is therefore, not surprising that academic disparities exist between privileged and non-privileged groups of children. While some disparities are evident, such as unequally funded schools, more often, privilege and power exert themselves in more subtle ways, such as over-valuing the dominant culture and under-valuing difference from the mainstream. Nieto emphasizes three main issues concerning language, culture, and learning: 1) Students' identification with, and maintenance of, their native culture and language can have a positive influence on learning; 2) The role of the teacher as a cultural accommodator and

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mediator is fundamental in promoting student learning; and 3) A focus on cultural

differences in isolation from the broader school and societal context will likely not lead to

increased learning or empowerment.

Refining the work of CRP, Villegas and Lucas (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) point to

the growing numbers of racially and culturally diverse students attending K-12 schools

nationwide, and the predominantly White teachers who serve their students ineffectively

due to insufficient knowledge of their backgrounds. This, they claim, accounts for the

racial/cultural discrepancy evidenced in academic achievement gaps. They hint at

Freire's (1973) use of the term *conscientização* with respect to educational

democratization in defining sociocultural consciousness as "awareness that one's

worldview is not universal but it is profoundly shaped by one's life experiences, as

mediated by a variety of factors, chief among them race/ethnicity, social class, and

gender" (p. 27). These different ways of knowing the world are not socially neutral; the

status of certain groups in any social system affords different access to power. Most

research focuses on inequalities within three realms: social class, as related to wealth;

gender, as evidenced by disparities in economic indicators like employment and income;

and race, as indicated through power differentials, especially for African Americans and

Hispanics when compared to their White American peers.   It is crucial, they attest, for

educators to question the neutrality of school and to locate themselves along the

continuum of sociocultural consciousness – from dysconsciousness to consciousness.

Villegas and Lucas additionally advocate for an affirming attitude toward students

who differ from the dominant culture. Working along this continuum, educators can

view students from a deficit perspective on one end and an affirming perspective on the

other end. The more teachers develop an affirming perspective, the more students' ways of thinking, talking, behaving, and learning are validated at school. This affirming perspective presupposes a high level of sociocultural consciousness and demonstrates itself when children of color are viewed as "capable learners who bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences to school" (p. 37). It requires that teachers reject deficit theories that devalue children based on genetics and culture and make concerted efforts to understand and expose the existing systemic biases that discriminate against marginalized groups of children. These systemic biases manifest themselves through segregated and unequally funded school systems and non-inclusive, disempowering school curriculum.

Also suggesting a Freireian (1998a) influence of educators as political agents, Villegas and Lucas call for educators to act as agents of change; to view their teacher role as moral and political, as opposed to objective and technical. This commitment, they grant, is met with numerous factors that prevent teachers from being agents of change: institutional barriers such as the hierarchical nature of the educational system; the bureaucratic nature of the educational system; insufficient time; insufficient opportunities for collaboration with colleagues; challenges of learning to teach during the first years of teaching; resistance by those in privileged positions to equity-oriented changes; lack of personal understanding of oppression and empathy for those who are oppressed; and despair that change is possible.   Indeed, I experienced almost all of these challenges at some point during the time of the study. Villegas and Lucas (2002) propose a list of actions that teacher educators can promote in preparing teachers to be agents of change, which were helpful and encouraging guidelines for me: emphasize the moral dimension of teaching; guide prospective teachers in developing their own personal vision of

education and teaching; promote the development of empathy for student of diverse backgrounds; nurture passion and idealism as well as a realistic understanding of obstacles to change; provide evidence that schools can become more equitable; teach about the change process; promote activism outside as well as inside the classroom; emphasize the importance of and develop skills for collective action and collaboration. This process, then, requires teachers to make a choice between ignoring social injustices, and therefore perpetuating them, or actively working against them.

Part of enacting a political stance requires embracing the constructivist foundations of culturally responsive teaching, a focus on views of knowledge, learning and teaching with a call to move away from transmission views and towards a constructivist framework. Constructivist views are "respectful of diversity, supportive of the principles of democracy and social justice, and have the potential to move education beyond rote memorization to understanding for all students" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 76). In other words, students' differences are strengths, not problems; all students are capable thinkers and learners, not deficit-based conformers of the traditional norm. Villegas and Lucas also extend the constructivist viewpoint of education beyond the classroom and into students' communities. In order to make learning authentic and relevant, constructivist educators build upon students' "funds of knowledge" (L. C. Moll & Gonzalez, 1997). Thus, it is imperative for teachers to know about students' lives outside of school, students' perceptions of school knowledge and belief in the potential for schooling to improve their lives, students' relationships to subject matter, and students' community lives.

To cultivate culturally responsive pedagogy, Villegas and Lucas propose that educators acknowledge that students come to school with differences, and therefore, instruction needs to reflect the multicultural contexts that students represent. In a multicultural classroom, all students need to be involved in the construction of knowledge, replete with open dialogues and opportunities to take ownership of their own learning. Second, teachers need to build on students' personal and cultural strengths by helping students access prior knowledge; building on students' interests and linguistic resources; using appropriate instructional materials, including the creation of different paths to learning by using varied instructional activities; and tapping into community resources. Thirdly, teachers should help students examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives and with a critical lens so that historically oppressed groups can begin to overcome alienation, and all students can prepare to resist assimilation to social inequalities. Fourth, teachers should use varied assessment practices that promote learning. Standardized tests are limiting when used as tracking systems to segregate students into instructional groups, rather than as learning tools for understanding students' knowledge. Learning-oriented assessments focus on students' construction of knowledge, applied to real world problems in a contextualized setting. Culturally responsive teachers break away from conventional assessment methods and design authentic assessment tasks that are consistent with learning goals and appropriate for the students. Lastly, teachers should make the culture of the classroom inclusive of all students. This requires acknowledgement that all learning takes place in a sociocultural context, and that discourse patterns and interaction styles vary within different contexts.

Likewise, my studies led me to consider various issues related to ethical research practices throughout the study. The nature of the teacher-student relationship raises questions about the validity, ethics, and voice of practitioner research. Practitioner research assumes that existing knowledge and the generation of new knowledge are defined by the participants. The students in this study were inherently vulnerable due to the inferior status they inhabited within a systematic power structure of teacher/school – student relationships. To this end, I attempted to disrupt the traditional teacher-student power dynamic within our classroom by employing student-led pedagogical practices, hinting at what Mohanty (2003) refers to as "decolonizing…pedagogical practices." I was transparent with students in my belief that knowledge is not objective truth, rather it is produced intersubjectively. As a teacher-researcher, one of my main goals was to learn from the students in order to better understand the ideas that were significant to them.

Zeni (2001) notes an assumption one must make while engaging in practitioner research: society is reasonably structured and orderly, as well as conflictual and oppressive. Throughout the unit of study, it was necessary for me to consider the political implications of the curricular topic, particularly when some students showed interest in participating in public protests. As I later discuss in more depth, a few students desired to push beyond the boundaries of (what I had considered to be) scholarly advocacy, towards more activist-based resistance. This challenged me as a discussion facilitator, as an adult teacher responsible for the safety of young people, and as a human in the process of negotiating my own positionality on the advocacy-activism continuum.

Moreover, I felt concerned with potentially negative psychological consequences for students as they recalled their personally painful past and current circumstances. Strack, Magill & McDonagh (2004) alert researchers to pay heed to potential "psychological repercussions associated with reflecting on unfair circumstances in youth's lives," (p. 57) and recommend in-depth interviews and field observations as data for measuring empowerment. This advisement was part of the driving force behind the research (interviews and observations) I conducted with students one year after the curricular unit concluded. [See chapter 5].

Lastly, the 'illegal/undocumented immigrant' identity that many of the students have inherited (regardless of their legal status) places them and their families at risk, and yet, they still desired for their stories to be publically known. For this reason, I have made every attempt to honor them by sharing their stories without revealing their individual identities. All names and other identifying markers have been changed to protect students' identities.

Social science research is often criticized for serving its own purposes; it can seem that any chosen research design, for example, merely validates the data and findings which best suit the researcher's thinking. When considering that objectivity and truth are complex and relative concepts, it becomes clear that all research is designed, to a degree, to serve its own purposes simply because it is conceived by individuals who approach it with particular histories, ways of knowing and of sense-making. By this accord, I do not deny that my own research includes subjective measures. The design of teacher-research is "[focused] on…the context of the environment and the needs of the human beings involved" (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. 13). Through the interactive work of teaching

and learning, reflection and reflexivity are central to interpreting the situated reality. My aim here is to describe the reality of my research with as much transparency as possible when delivering teaching processes and in interpreting students' work and personal interactions so as to render further meaning-making opportunities to its readers, including those who are represented in this text.

Practitioner Research within the Study Context

In my role as a practitioner researcher, I recursively examined my own work as well as the work of my students. Thus, this research study aimed to explore a series of questions related to dual aspects of the practitioner-researcher lens, though, as I will later discuss in Chapter 6, these questions served more as a guide for understanding the study's landscape, as opposed to a set of items to address linearly. Under examination were my own practices as a teacher, as well as my assessments and analyses of my students' work as it relates to the ways that immigrant adolescents express their identity constructions and claims through literacy learning in a sheltered ESL classroom driven by inquiry and student-led interest. Specific questions addressed in the study include three items related to curriculum design and students' identity development; and three questions which focus on practitioner-research methods and the teacher's identity development:

In what ways does inquiry-based, student-led learning contribute to positive identity development for English language learners?

What challenges emerge while attempting to fulfill the dual roles of practitioner and researcher in the same time and space?

What can I learn about myself and my practice through a practitioner-researcher approach?

While there is significant overlap and reciprocity between the theories of Critical and Culturally Responsive pedagogies, when considering the intricacies of these two methodological lenses, some tensions surface as well. Critical Pedagogy seems to emphasize the socially-constructed paradigm within which 'the oppressed' and 'the liberated' exist. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) tends to call greater attention to cultural implications of race, ethnicity, and nationhood, focusing on the agentic possibilities of individuals.

While the intentions of CRP are anti-racist and anti-essentializing, there is irony in the way it can be interpreted in practice, and outside of the academic realm. The large body of research dedicated to CRP as it relates to African-American achievement disparity (Delpit, 2006; Heath, 1982; hooks, 1994; T. C. Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994), for example, can be interpreted as reifying the racial black-white dichotomy. Especially detected in the Multicultural Education roots of CRP, Richard Hatcher observes, a multicultural approach is grounded in a celebration of difference within the middle-class norm, "a concept of culture innocent of class" (1987, p. 188). May (1999) reaffirms that Multicultural Education's impacts have been limited in ameliorating the "life chances of minority students, the racialized attitudes of majority students, the inherent monoculturalism of school practice, and the wider processes of power relations and inequality which underpin all these" (p. 1). Over time, proponents of Multicultural

Education have withdrawn from some of the overly idealistic notions of 'celebrating cultural difference' and expanded their thinking to incorporate more of the complexities associated with culture, including socioeconomic inequities within class structures (H. Giroux, 2001; McLaren & Torres, 1999). While this later philosophical shift acknowledges both race and class, it, too, bears the critique for essentializing tendencies along black/white, rich/poor dichotomies. When essentializing notions of culture are used as the foundations for culturally responsive pedagogy, the diverse cultural backgrounds of students are usurped by an agenda that, perhaps unintentionally, categorizes without practitioners' critical inquiry or reflection.

The body of literature focusing on achievement disparities between African American and White students has been at the forefront for understanding culture and cultural norms in schools. The work of Shirley Brice Heath (1982), for example, is well known as ground-breaking research that examined language and school socialization in North Carolina, revealing that students from White, middle class families possess an advantage in schools due to the similarities between their home and school cultural practices. In contrast, the low-income White and Black peers in her study did not fare as well within the school discourse, a bias exemplified through the dominant cultural literacy practice of bedtime stories. Heath illustrated the way the bedtime story ritual, practiced within the primary or home discourse, reinforced the recitation skills used in schools, thus providing students who are familiar with bedtime story rituals with an advantage at school success.

With the more recent inclusion of research that considers the academic disparities of ethnic and racial minorities other than African Americans (i.e. Asian Americans,

Native Americans, Latino/as and Latino/a Americans), the risk for racial, cultural and ethnic essentialism can be further homogenized in practice. Li (2006) examined dissonance between Asian immigrant families and the mainstream culture in Canada. Her study in a Vancouver suburb revealed contested views of schooling and literacy between Canadian Native teachers and Asian immigrant parents and students. Herself a Chinese immigrant to Canada, Li drew from teachers', parents' and students' voices at an elementary school to examine conflicting discourses within the participants' school and home communities in which the middle-to-upper-middle class Asian immigrants made up the racial majority numerically. The Chinese parents' views of schooling, which aligned with a traditional, teacher-centered instructional approach, represented what they considered rigorous teaching necessary for future social mobility. The teachers in the study were middle-class, native, White Euro-Canadians. Pedagogically trained as English Teachers (though, not ESL Teachers), their beliefs reflected mainstream, student-centered, "progressive instructional approaches that [were] considered beneficial to the education of white, middle-class children" (p. 185). In addition to academics, the teachers focused heavily on teaching citizenship and well-roundedness as part of curricular activity. While the children were at school, the teachers attempted to enforce an "English-only" policy, and encouraged the children to take English language books home to read, a point of criticism against the Chinese parents for not reading these books at home. The teachers in the study also voiced concern for many of the Chinese children's social behavior and development. The teachers felt that there was too much pressure placed on the children to focus on academics after school, and not enough emphasis was given to recreational play and socialization.

Li borrows Brian Street's '*pedagogization of literacy*' to describe the social positioning of the Canadian teachers' and the Chinese families' in the study. Pedagogization of literacy defines "literacy and its instruction solely in terms of school-based notions of teaching and learning while marginalizing other forms of literacy, such as those held by the Chinese parents" (p. 192).

Similarly, Guadelupe Valdes' (1996) ethnographic study highlights the ways in which ten Mexican immigrant families negotiated the cultural differences they experienced in the United States. She reported the difficulties Mexican families faced when they decided to leave their families and home communities in order to survive economically, pointing to several factors that helped to explain the mismatch in understanding and experiencing US schooling. The school assumed that certain notions of schooling and 'what counts as knowing' were universal. Therefore, home-school communications, such as class scheduling and report cards, or expectations for parent involvement at school created much confusion for both parties. The Mexican parents did not understand (and were not provided with a comprehensive description) of the bilingual program offered by the school, nor the grading system. They attended school events when they were invited to open houses or ceremonies, but only initiated contact with the school with concerns about their children's behavior; they felt it was their parental duty to teach the children to behave well; it was the teacher's duty to teach them English and academics. While US schools expect children to be able to recite the alphabet by first grade as a sign of reading development, Mexican schools value teaching vowel-consonant syllable blends as fundamental to reading.

The common response to these misunderstandings, Valdes notes, are well-intentioned, school-initiated programs to bridge the distance with non-mainstream families, namely, parent education programs, parent involvement programs, and parent or family empowerment programs. Interventions of these sorts, however, seek to change families under the presumption that mainstream culture is the 'right' approach. In effect, they reinforce the existing power imbalance between mainstream and non-mainstream cultures, while disregarding immigrant communities as ones that are embedded within U.S. society.

Further complexities surface when considering other various aspects of culture and identity. Irizarry (2007) calls for a recognition that race and ethnicity are not the sole defining attributes of culture; many varied, complex, hybrid identities arise out of interactions, experiences, and relationships with those who are multiethnic and/or multiracial (and/or multicultural). Findings from his study with Latino and African American/Black students and their African American teacher reveal that culturally responsive teaching requires more than a standard checklist of *what* to know about students who come from cultures which differ from that of the teacher; CRP also involves a deep understanding of *who* the teacher and students are culturally. The teacher in the study allowed for fluid use of languages – English, Spanish, as well as Ebonics were used by students and teacher alike in daily classroom communications. Additionally, the teacher integrated rap music into the curriculum as a way to affirm students' interests and background knowledge. Irizarry argues for enacting *cultural connectedness,* "a framework for understanding the fluid nature of culture and the variety of ways that members of a cultural group express their cultural identities" (2007, p. 27), as a way for

teachers to better understand their own culture, those of their students, and the ways that different cultural backgrounds connect to one another.

Studies such as these offer clear examples of how multiple discourses co-exist and collide within a community, revealing the disconnects between school practices and non-dominant cultural ways of knowing. Those who are part of the dominant discourse, perhaps unintentionally, suppress and marginalize those outside of it. This knowledge implicates and advocates for changes in curriculum and policy that reflect and honor multiple cultural perspectives as legitimate pathways to academic success. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *cultural capital* , these studies acknowledge the bias of cultural values within a given power system; that those who inhabit the values of the dominant culture have greater access to power. In an effort to meet the needs of different cultural groups, the act of defining those groups tends to over-generalize cultural norms.

Theories of hybridity can be helpful in deciphering some of the nuances inherent in understanding cultural identity. The concept of hybridity is rooted in several different theoretical perspectives and fields of study. As it relates to literacy research, the principal thinkers and writers on hybridity draw upon post-structuralist, post-modernist and post-colonialist theories. Alfonso de Toro claims "hybridity as an epistemological category means to think of the world, life and knowledge in a temporary discontinual way starting from the concepts of difference and altarity" (2006, p. 22) and "is always inherent to culture, to identity and nations" (p. 21). Thus, while 'hybridity' implies different meanings when applied in various social, cultural, historical, political, economic, literary, and linguistic contexts, it is important to preface that the aforementioned contexts are

interrelated and interdependent. Here, I will focus on a few selected scholars who have heavily influenced conceptualizations of hybridity in literacy research.

Amongst the most influential and oft-referenced contributors is Russian philosopher Mikhail M. Bakhtin, whose direct writings on hybridity are mostly concerned with disparate voices within the literary novel, though his influence has since been expanded to interpretations of cultural, national and racial identities. His theory of linguistic hybridity is defined as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation…"(Bakhtin, 1935, p. 358). Thus, for Bakhtin, hybridity is a process closely related to *dialogism* and *double-voicedness*; the process of mixing occurs in a contested space, involving at least two conflicting voices or "consciousnesses".

Bakhtin further distinguishes between "organic, historical hybridity" and "conscious, intentional hybridity":

> Unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. We may even say that language and languages change historically primarily by hybridization, by means of mixing various 'languages' (Bakhtin, 1935, pp. 358-359).

In instances of conscious, intentional hybridity, on the other hand, Bakhtin asserts that "two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically" (1935, p. 360). The existence of this dialogic challenge, or *heteroglossia*, creates space for a new

viewpoint to exist *in between* predetermined discourses. Bakhtin iterated this dialogic

'in-betweeness' as 'Thirdspace', a space in between the self and the 'other' in which new

meanings and identities are constructed and cultural dynamics are understood as a

process of creative hybridization. Thirdspace allows for what Bakhtin calls 'cultural-

semiotic development' that is neither an inferior form nor a transitional state in the

process of assimilation.

Other conceptualizations of *hybridity* and *third space* arose out of post-colonial

discourse and help to problematize notions of identity. Homi Bhabha's (1994)

postcolonial theory about emerging cross-cultural relations uses a post-structuralist lens

to critique colonialism as a fixed history. He argues that cultural histories and

perspectives can transform across barriers of time and location, upsetting the limited,

traditional definition of the colonizer-colonized relationship, and revealing an in-

between, *third space* which "provides the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood –

singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of

collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha,

1994, pp. 1-2). Thus, while Bhabha's thinking partially aligns with that of Bakhtin in

terms of conceptualizing hybridity as a historic or organic process of mixing, Bhabha also

implies that hybridity is a condition which speaks back to the colonizing authority,

insisting on an identity of difference while resisting assimilation and marginalization.

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are

produced perfomatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read

as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of

tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a

complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that

emerge in moments of historical transformation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3).

Bhabha also emphasizes the importance of avoiding cultural relativism by

employing critical reflexivity. He draws a distinction between cultural *diversity*, which

treats culture as an *object* of empirical knowledge, static, totalized, and historically

bounded – as something to be valued but not necessarily *lived*; and cultural *difference*, a

process of the enunciation of culture as "knowledgeable", as adequate to the construction

of systems of cultural identification (Bhabha, 1994). The latter notion of cultural

difference allows for individual agency and temporal fluidity in identity construction.

Other conceptions of cultural hybridity focus on qualities of agency and

hegemony within social systems. Nestor Garcia Canclini (1995) investigates tensions

between Latin American tradition and modernity to theorize about hybridity with respect

to its use in understanding the mixed realities of Latin American societies. He offers the

term "tiempos mixtos" or "multitemporal heterogeneity" as a description for the linkages

between traditions of the past with the politics, culture and economics of the present.

Reflecting on an encounter he had with a middle-aged Oaxacan man, he writes:

> When I asked him about the tapestries with images of Picasso, Klee, and
>
> Miro that he had on display, he told me they started to make them in 1968, when
>
> some tourists visited who worked in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and
>
> proposed that they renovate their designs. He showed me an album of photos and
>
> newspaper clippings in English that analyzed the exhibitions this artisan had done

in California. In half an hour I saw him move with ease from Zapotec to Spanish

and to English, from art to crafts, from his ethic group to the information and

entertainment of mass culture, passing through the art criticism of a metropolis. I

understood that my worries about the loss of their traditions was not shared by

this man who moved without too many conflicts between three cultural systems

(Garcia Canclini, 1995, pp. 177-178).

In this anecdote, Garcia Canclini is able to elucidate some of the ways that

language and culture transcend time and space, without any one feature replacing another

due to colonization or modernity. Latin American modernity, Garcia Canclini concludes,

has *integrated* tradition, not replaced it. These notions of negotiated power shifts and

identity legitimization, then, recognize globalization's influence on fluid temporal,

spatial, and cultural movements.

In contemporary research and practice, the concept of *hybridity* is found in the

company of related expressions such as *transnationalism* (Kearney, 1995; Sanchez,

2007), *hyphenated (Asher, 2008), glocalization* (Kraidy, 1999), *mestizaje* and

borderlands (Anzaldua, 1987). Collectively, these ideas help reveal the potential for

cultural, racial, linguistic, and national identity claims that can be made by individuals

who inhabit more than one preconceived social construct; they echo possible

explanations for Nestor Garcia Canclini's pondering, "How do we analyze the

manifestations that do not fit into the cultures or the popular, that spring from their

crossings or on their margins?" (1995, p. 206). By broadening the way we think about

identity and 'the self', we can begin to deconstruct dominant and oppressive discourses

about cultural identity claims to reveal qualities of agency, creativity, self-awareness, and

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legitimization. Given that identity is socially constructed, 'hybridity' also helps inform

conceptualizations of literacy or *literacies*, which acknowledge multiple ways to

approach and interact with texts within different sociocultural contexts.

Further exploring the complications inherent in issues of identity, May (1999, p.

27) articulates, "How can we acknowledge group-based cultural differences – which

clearly exist – while at the same time holding on to a non-essentialist conception of

culture?...how can we take ethnicity seriously in a way that does not entail its reification

as a set of fixed cultural properties?" He (2003) borrows the term *critical*

multiculturalism (McLaren, 1995) to suggest a paradigm which 1) theorizes ethnicity, 2)

acknowledges unequal power relations, 3) critiques constructions of culture, and 4)

maintains critical reflexivity. Applying Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *habitus* and its four

key dimensions – embodiment, agency, the interplay between past and present, and the

interrelationship between collective and individual trajectories - he examines the

durability and malleability of ethnicity and ethnic identity development, but invites

"theoretical eclecticism [as a] prominent and welcome feature of critical

multiculturalism" (p. 209). Also key to critical multiculturalism is a recognition and

understanding of power discourses that revolve around politically and historically

situated social constructions of identity, as "individuals and groups are inevitably located,

and often *differentially* constrained, by wider structural forces such as capitalism, racism,

colonialism, and sexism" (p. 210). Further, the discourse of power extends beyond

individuals and groups to hegemonic constructions of cultural knowledge, allowing for

possibilities of revaluing previously oppressed ways of knowing as critiques of dominant

forms of knowledge. Finally, and perhaps most notably, May advocates for continual,

reflexive critiques of culture and cultural practices, both internal and external to specific cultural groups, so that cultural and historical situatedness can be recognized, without being constrained.

As teacher-researchers, Kris Gutierrez and Gerald Campano offer examples of critical multiculturalism in a classroom setting. Both researchers examined possible bridges between dissonant discourses and demonstrated the importance of culture in relation to learning. Campano (2007) introduced the concept of a "second classroom," the spaces and times in between formal classroom instruction, when discussing the ways in which his immigrant students were able to claim privileged knowledge of their diasporic identities. Similarly, Gutierrez's (2008) use of the term "collective third space" privileges forms of literacy derived from non-dominant students' socio-historical and socio-cultural lives. In both of these studies, students' demonstrate creativity and agency in imagining their present and future life trajectories.

CRP, and ultimately, critical multiculturalism were instrumental in informing my daily practices of teaching, learning, researching, and reflecting throughout this study. In the midst of the study, I drew heavily from Gutierrez (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999) and Mohanty (2002) to propose an early conception of a 'third space-imagined community', a dialogical and collaborative space created in the midst of contestation, in which the voices of participants are privileged to generate understanding and development (Greene, 2012).

Critical multiculturalism, in particular, continued to help me better understand the relationships between my classroom space, my students, and my teacher-role in

generative ways. Reflecting upon varying aspects of the learning community I facilitated with English language learners and analyzing more of the data from the inquiry unit we engaged together, another iteration of 'third-space-imagined-community' emerged. This revised conception of 'third-space-imagined-community' offers a holistic theoretical framework through which inquiry-based, literacy learning can be explained. Three main theories, third-space (Gutierrez, 2008), epistemic privilege (Moya, 2002), and imagined future (Mohanty, 2003), serve as the foundations for building curricular practice which lends itself to building a learning community that honors and privileges the cultural backgrounds of all participants as well as providing opportunities for empowerment.

In the following three chapters, I offer detailed accounts related to the student-led inquiry unit on immigration that I facilitated with adolescent English language learners over the course of an academic year. The chapters are organized in three parts: collective sense-making in the classroom; students' collective written narratives; and reflecting and regenerating narrative writing practices.

The words that follow are not intended to serve as prescriptive curricular suggestions. In fact, the exact conditions of our class time together can never again be recreated, even if the same participants were to reconvene, because our individual and collective knowledge has evolved since that time. These writings are meant to disclose the sometimes chaotic, often exciting, always challenging process of teaching and learning, in which my students and I assumed active roles in generating curriculum using inquiry-based methods.

Chapter 3: Collective Sensemaking

At the start of the 2008-09 school year, several of my students informally approached me with questions and concerns about the growing anti-immigrant, and more specifically, anti-Hispanic sentiments they were hearing at school, in their neighborhoods, and on the news. Picking up on their interests and curiosities, I allowed them to explore the topic of immigration within the formal structure of our ESL class. Our collective engagement in this issue turned into a year-long inquiry on "Immigration in the United States."

The student-participants in the inquiry unit were all members of an ESL Intermediates class, led by me, the ESL Teacher for the school. The majority of students in the class were first-generation immigrants from Latin American countries; one student was a first-generation immigrant from Cote d'Ivoire; and some students were second-generation immigrants from Latin American countries. All students' names are pseudonyms and some identifying markers have been changed to protect students' identities.

Students were placed into the ESL Intermediates course, in part, based upon their overall LAS Links score. The state-mandated LAS-Links assessment was administered to any language minority student who was new to the state at the time of school enrollment. A language minority student was defined as "any child whose home environment, native language, and/or background is other than English" (IDOE, 2003). LAS Links scores were used to determine students' English proficiency level, a key factor used in his/her academic placement/scheduling as well as a benchmark indicator for growth. Proficiency level was determined by assessing students' listening, speaking,

reading, writing, and comprehension of formal, academic English. The four language

domains were defined as follows:

Listening	The ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse through which teachers provide information.
Speaking	The ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.
Reading	The ability to comprehend and interpret content-area text at the age- or grade-appropriate level.
Writing	The ability to produce written text with content and format, fulfilling classroom assignments at the age- or grade-appropriate level.

The scores were rated on a continuum scale of 1-5, where Levels 1-4 were

considered Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Level 5 was considered Fluent English

Proficient (FEP). Most of the students in the class were Level 3s or Level 4s at the time

of the study. A description of each level follows:

Level 1 (LEP)	Beginner	Students performing at this level of English language proficiency begin to demonstrate receptive or productive English skills.

		They are able to respond to some simple communication tasks.
Level 2 (LEP)	Early Intermediate	Students performing at this level of English language proficiency respond with increasing ease to more varied communication tasks.
Level 3 (LEP)	Intermediate	Students performing at this level of English language proficiency tailor the English language skills they have been taught to meet their immediate communication and learning needs. They are able to understand and be understood in many basic social situations (while exhibiting many errors of convention) and need support in academic language.

Level 4 (LEP)	Advanced	Students performing at this level of English language proficiency combine the elements of the English language in complex, cognitively demanding situations and are able to use English as a means for learning in other academic areas, although some minor errors of conventions are still evident.
Level 5 (FEP)	Fluent English Proficient	Students performing at this level of English language proficiency communicate effectively with various audiences on a wide range of familiar and new topics to meet social and academic demands. Students speak, understand, read, write, and comprehend English without difficulty and display

academic achievement
comparable to native
English-speaking peers. To
attain the English
proficiency level of their
native English-speaking
peers, further linguistic
enhancement and refinement
are necessary.

The Inquiry Unit within the Practitioner-Researcher Study within the Inquiry Unit

Campano and Damico's (2007) research discusses how students' life experiences and interpretations can reveal powerful, social and political statements.   Drawing from post positivist theory, New Literacy Studies, and Moya's (2002) conception of epistemic privilege, "a special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society operate to sustain matrices of power," (Moya, 2002, p. 38) they offer a conceptual framework for critical, pedagogical practices in their classrooms which invites educators to consider that literacy and social action can be intertwined. As a novice practitioner-researcher, this idea of intertwining literacy and social action intrigued me and gave me confidence to explore: *What happens when adolescent immigrant students are positioned as significant contributors in creating their own literacy curriculum?*

The learning unit began with a literacy invitation, adapted from Benoit's (1991) lesson plan. I read and shared a print copy of an excerpt from "A Speech by a Famous American." Students were asked to read along and listen for the meaning of the words, and think about the following questions:

Who do you think wrote this speech?

When do you think this speech was given?

What group of people is being described in the speech?

What are the issues raised in the speech?

Do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

The text read as follows:

> I agree that these people are a matter of great concern to us. I fear that one day, through their mistakes or ours, great troubles may occur. The ones who come here are usually the most stupid of their nation. Few understand our language, so we cannot communicate with them through our newspapers. Their priests and religious leaders seem to have little influence over them. They are not used to freedom and do not know how to use it properly. It has been reported that young men do not believe they are true men until they have shown their manhood by beating their mothers. They do not believe they are truly free unless they also abuse and insult their teachers. And now they are coming to our country in great numbers. Few of their children know English. They bring in much of their own reading from their homeland and print newspapers in their own language. In some parts of our state, ads, street signs, and even some legal documents are in their own language and allowed in courts. Unless the stream of these people can be turned away from their country to other countries, they will soon outnumber us so that we will not be able to save our language or our government. However, I am not in favor of keeping them out entirely. All that seems necessary is to distribute them more evenly among us and set up more schools that teach English. In this way, we will preserve the true heritage of our country.

During reading and listening to the speech, students were given the opportunity to write down their initial thoughts and queries, using the questions as thinking prompts. After reading through and listening to the speech twice, I facilitated a class discussion using the question prompts as guides. Most students thought the speech was delivered in the present day by a middle-aged, White man who was concerned about Spanish-speaking, Mexican and Latino immigrants coming to the United States. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the speaker, all the students expressed feelings of either anger or hurt at the sentiments stated in the speech, though many students agreed that immigrants need to learn English in order to live and survive in the United States. One student additionally qualified, "I disagree with this stament (sic) because most of the people understand *more than* English," astutely noticing a sense of deficit-based connotations attached to languages other than English and invoking a sense of advocacy for multilingualism. All the students were surprised to learn that Benjamin Franklin gave this speech in the late 1700s and the immigrants who concerned him most were German settlers. Some of the student responses exposed confusions and misconceptions they held with respect to race and nationality:

"But aren't all of the Germans White?"

"I didn't know that White people immigrated to the U.S.A. I thought Whites were always Americans here."

"What? So he didn't want them here just because of their language? That's rude!"

(Greene, 2008-2009)

Other student responses indicated a sense of justification in their knowledge, especially when I displayed a picture of Benjamin Franklin for them to view. For example, one student shouted out, "I *knew* it was a White guy [who gave the speech]" (Greene, 2008-2009).

Initially, the discussion displayed to me a need and a desire for deeper exploration and understanding of race, language, and culture. Going back through the student responses to the literacy invitation and thinking about the informal conversations my students were initiating about current events surrounding U.S. immigration reform, I could see that race, language, and culture were all closely related issues that could be further investigated through studying the central topic of immigration in the United States. It was less clear to me how much students already knew about the history of U.S. immigration or what they were most curious to know about regarding the complexities of race, language, and culture.

The next day, I directed students to a "graffiti wall," a largely blank piece of butcher paper taped to one of our classroom walls that read: "Immigration: Share your thoughts." Students were invited to share their current thinking on the wall by writing down questions, comments, opinions, and/or responses to other students' questions and statements. In turn, I was able to better gauge where students were in their current understandings. A sampling of students' questions continued our inquiry:

Why the President Bush want to put a wall between here [and] Mexico?

Why don't they want us here?/ Do they not like us?

Why do they want…Mexicans out of [their] country?

Can Obama stop deportation?

Can Obama help immigrant people? (Greene, 2008-2009)
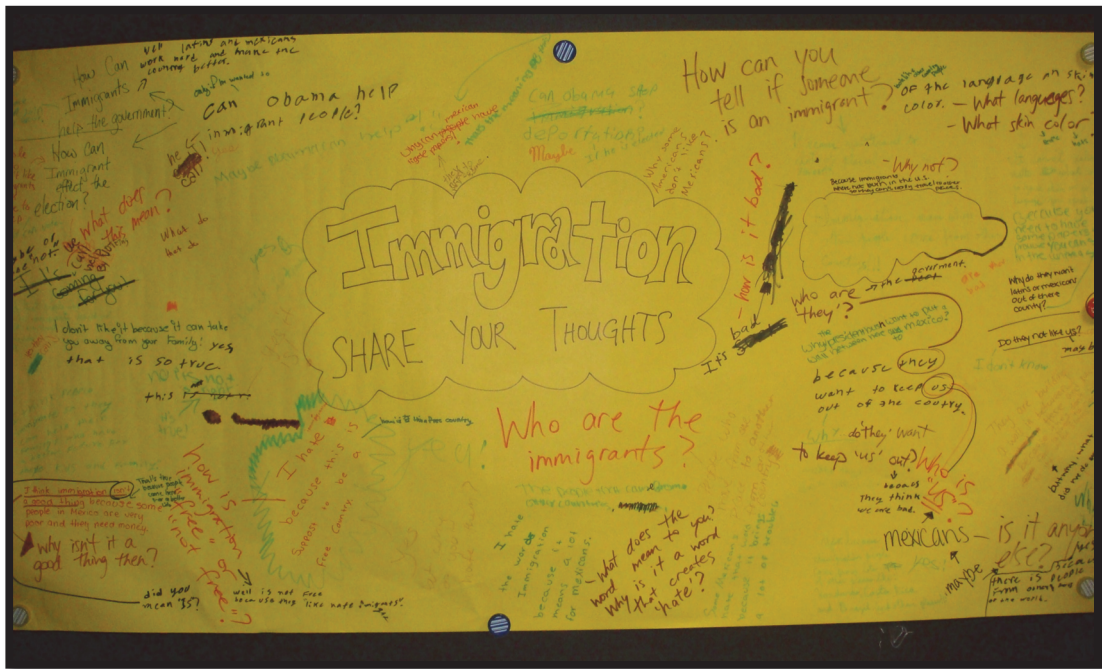
Using the students' initial inquiries, I created six large posters and hung them around the room. At the top of each poster, I had printed a statement based upon some of the assumptions students were making at the time. Underneath each statement was a space for students to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed. I hung the posters around the room and invited students to do a "gallery walk" exercise, in which they would walk around the room to visit each of the posters, read the statement, and then use a sticky-note to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each respective statement. The six statements and the quantified student responses are listed in the following chart.

| | Start of Inquiry | |
Statement	Agree	Disagree
The only reason people immigrate is to find a better job.	0	16
People of Latino descent have recently begun immigrating to the United States.	15	1
People of the African/Black Race have been discriminated against more than other immigrant groups in the United States.	11	5
The United States finds immigrants to be a problem.	16	0
Life is easier once immigrants move to a new place.	8	8
People of the White Race do not immigrate to the United States.	0	16

Looking at the gallery walk posters, students and I were able to quickly assess their collective knowledge base. At the start of the unit, a clear majority of the class agreed with five of the six statements, and the class tally was equally split for one statement, "Life is easier once immigrants move to a new place."

I facilitated numerous tense class discussions about the students' responses on the graffiti wall and gallery walk activities. Some students expressed anger and outrage over racial incidents they experienced in school and their neighborhoods, attempting to offer legitimacy to the comments they posted on the graffiti wall. Some students seemed hesitant to talk about race, perhaps because it was not a typical topic examined in a classroom setting.

Their stance of agreement with the Gallery Walk statements gave me some insight into my students' families' reasons for immigration - primarily, economic - and spoke to their awareness and perception of present-day Latino and Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. as a highly politicized, media-centric issue. Their privileged knowledge offered great potential for meaningful dialogue about pressing social inequalities and economic issues. Towards the end of our discussion, I suggested we take some time to learn about the experiences of other immigrants in U.S. history and, upon a vote, all the students agreed they wanted to know more.

As a teacher-researcher, Campano (2007) used an interpretive text of a migrant child's life to compare and contrast the reactions of his fifth grade, multiethnic students with those of pre-service teachers and professors. While the adults' responses revealed feelings of sympathy, Campano noted that the children seemed to reflect sentiments of sympatico with the migrant child in the story (Campano, 2007, p. 225). Students can feel empowered through their literacy responses when teachers value their unique ways of knowing and understanding their world through the lenses of race, language, gender, nation or other socio-political identities.

I conducted a similar comparison exercise, inviting fellow doctoral students in my graduate program, many of whom identified as first-generation Asian immigrants and/or international students, to participate in the Gallery Walk exercise. Unlike the middle school students, the doctoral students unanimously indicated disagreement with all of the statements, perhaps revealing that their reasons for immigration are other than economic, and/or more likely, that life experience, including their social locations (Bourdieu, 1986),

have afforded them educational resources and historical and global perspectives on immigration which are more comprehensive than those of adolescents.

When I asked my middle school students what they noticed about the adults' responses, they expressed three main sentiments:

"They don't like us [immigrants]."

"They disagreed with everything we said."

"They must think immigrants are stupid."

Their initial responses seemed to reflect a sense of guarded defense, similar to that which they carried in their daily lives. This defense grew out of witnessing and experiencing the labors of their families during a politically-charged era of anti-immigrant, and most specifically, anti-Latino, sentiments in the local and national communities. I probed further, asking if their opinions would change if they knew that many of the adults that participated also identified as first-generation immigrants. The middle-school students had a difficult time believing this, but it prompted them to ask deeper questions about how and why their perspectives differed. This led to some critical conversation about the varying reasons people immigrate, immigration laws that allow and exclude certain populations, religious persecution, and racial inequalities. Students discovered that they initially responded to the statements from their own awareness of history and personal immigration experiences, and that there are many other ways of experiencing what it means to be an immigrant. As students digested this shift in perspective, I tried to emphasize the importance of recognizing that *all* people hold a privileged social location – including them – and that those personal perspectives and

experiences are as ones of value and worth, ones that can offer validity and voice if they choose to accept the invitation to be heard.

Moving forward, I offered some narrative texts and video archives of immigrant stories as resources to get them started with some research. Some examples of teacher-provided texts included case studies from Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America (Carnes, Tauss, & Blackmun, 1999); a viewing of Guggenheim's documentary *The Shadow of Hate* (1995); readings, activities, and videos from PBS websites: "Destination America," (PBS, 2005) "The New Americans," (PBS, 2004b) "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience," (PBS, 2003) "American Family: A Journey of Dreams," (PBS, 2004a); and historical information about various immigrant groups documented in the U.S. Library of Congress ("Immigration," 2001). From there, students decided which stories were most intriguing to them and, as a class, they investigated different immigrant groups across U.S. history using the "jigsaw" structural approach to cooperative learning (Kagan & Kagan, 2008). Students partnered with one another to become "experts" on the stories of Irish immigrants after the potato famine, Japanese immigrants and the internment camps, African immigrants during the slave trade, Jewish immigrants during and after the Holocaust, Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush and construction of the transcontinental railroad, Mexican immigrants during NAFTA negotiations, and Rwandan refugees seeking asylum.

Next, students chose to create slideshows to represent and demonstrate their learning, which included images they found and captions they wrote, to accompany oral narratives of their chosen immigrant group. In the roles of presenter and audience member, the students seemed riveted by the dramatic tales of struggle, adventures, and

triumphs of previous U.S. immigrants. Students were also disturbed by the missteps of history – those of injustice and intolerance. As an example, one group of students gave a presentation on Mexican immigrants who came to the United States in the mid-to-late 1990s under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). One of the images shown, along with its caption, follows:

> In 1994 the [U.S.] government made NAFTA laws for Mexicans to come to the United States to do works and jobs and then people are mad at Mexicans for taking the jobs. This sign shows Mexicans crossing to the United States for work. There is a border polices there looking to catch Mexicans trying to cross the border. (Greene, 2009)

This presentation evoked particularly impassioned responses from classmates. Giddiani, for example, blurted out, "So you mean the U.S. asked us to come here and now they be trying to deport us? Man, that's not right."

Concurrent to their research, I sought out other community members who had immigration stories they were willing to share with our class and invited them to engage in class discussions. In addition to inviting fellow doctoral students to visit, observe, and participate in our class activities, other honored guests included university professors and the Dean of the School of Education, a first-generation Cuban American. They

participated in roundtable discussions with the middle school students, sharing and listening to personal stories of immigration and thoughts on immigration reform. Additionally, I learned that one of the teachers in our school had a connection to an organization of DREAMers, a group of immigrant college students, at a nearby university. We arranged for 12 college freshman and sophomore students – all of whom were first and second generation immigrants, most of whom were undocumented immigrants - to come to our middle school and talk about their experiences with scholarship applications, college entrance exams and essays, and daily life at a university.

One college student shared the shock and disappointment he felt when he learned he would be ineligible for federal student loans, even though he had attended all of his schooling since Kindergarten in the United States. "If you're undocumented, it don't matter how long you've been here," he told the students. He stressed the importance of doing well in school in order to increase the chances of getting scholarship money for college. "It is not easy for us [immigrants]," he said, "you have to work twice as hard [as documented citizens] to prove that you can belong here." While listening to the personal accounts of struggle to get into and attend college, a few of the middle school students asked questions which generated poignant conversation.

> Middle School Student: "Why did you decide to go to college if it was so hard? Why didn't you just get a job?"
>
> College Student: "Well, I do have a job right now. And it was hard to find a job. I have to make money to pay for my food and my school…for books and stuff…and for rent. It costs lots of monies to live and I don't make so much

money right now…. I know that if I can get a college degree, I can make more money and have an easier life for my family.”

College Student: “My parents sacrificed a lot of their life to bring [my siblings and I] to this country…. I am going to college because I owe it to them to make a better life for myself and my family.”

College Student: “I am undocumented. That means that I cannot get a job legally in this country because I don’t have my papers. I am hoping for the DREAM Act to pass so that I can get a good job [in the U.S.] after I graduate from college.”

Middle School Student: “But what if the DREAM Act doesn’t pass?”

College Student: “What if it does? …You have to keep learning and trying your best and having hope. You have to always have hope.”

Middle School Student: “Did you ever want to give up?”

Several College Students [in unison]: “Yes!”

College Student: [laughing] “I want to give up, like, everyday!” Then, taking a more serious tone, “But I know I cannot give up. It would be like wasting all of my dreams for my future. Just like [another student] said – you have to keep working…and keep hoping.”

In later reflections, my middle school students revealed the significance of those visits to them. Alberto, for example, shared:

> The most thing that got my attention …was the visits from college kids. The reason why is because I never thought about all that stuff I have to do to get into college. I know that I want to be somebody and that it will take lots of hard works so that I can get scholarships to go to college. I want to make my family proud.

Alberto's reflection revealed how important it was for him to be able to meet and speak with college students who are immigrants. Alberto planned to be the first member of his family to attend college, the key to becoming "somebody" in his mind. His family supported and encouraged his goals, but Alberto additionally needed human resources with college experience to guide him through the process. Through learning the stories of other immigrants who were currently going to college, Alberto began to internalize some of the challenges he would face in more realistic terms than he had previously considered.

Brenda and Ana commented, respectively:

> At first I didn't know what to expect [from the visits with university professors and students]…but I think it was a great idea to have some university kids come to our class and us being able to talk to them and learn stuff…

> Something interesting that I liked…when the people from the university came in and heard some of our stories. I really enjoyed being in this kind of situation. I did not know how important [we] were to many people.

In her reflection, Brenda hinted at the nervousness I sensed from several students in the days leading up to the visits. For most of my middle school immigrant students, the idea of attending a university had either never been a consideration, or else it was viewed as an impossible pursuit due to the financial restraints placed on undocumented

youth. The opportunity to have face-to-face interactions with immigrants who had graduated or were attending college shifted the middle schoolers' thinking about what was possible for their futures.

Through the process of students' collective sense-making, a third-space-imagined-community revealed itself. The university represented a contested space for undocumented immigrants — a symbol of institutionalized bias and a place that would remain unreachable and unwelcoming unless the DREAM Act became law. Ana's reflection revealed the sense of surprise she felt in realizing that she and her immigrant peers were considered important to university professors and graduate students. To her, it seemed they served as ambassadors of a higher education system that otherwise seemed inaccessible. The expressions of interest and appreciation that the university representatives shared for the middle school students' stories and experiences proved to be deeply legitimizing for their self-images.

Examples of understanding and development were evident in the form of leadership amongst peers, collaborative problem solving, and agentic notions of themselves as immigrants.

Leadership Amongst Peers

One of the challenges we faced in our language learning was initiating and conducting formal class discussions about our learning-that is, speaking and listening to one another in the classroom. While many students openly shared their thoughts in class, a few students seemed shy or reluctant about sharing aloud. Some of these same students, however, would approach me in, what Campano (2007) would call the "second

classroom" – in between classes, after school, or during lunch- and share personal anecdotes about their immigrant families or ask questions about immigration reform. I knew they were thinking and learning about our curricular content, but I was struggling to show how they were demonstrating growth through our formal classroom discussions. Knowing that I needed to be able to measure student growth in all four language domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), I decided to create an online chat room on our class website and offer it as another forum for discussion. From a language learning standpoint, it would allow students to practice communicating in the domain of writing, an area in which second language learners commonly struggle. This group of students was not unique in this respect; as a whole, they resisted most writing activities I presented to them, preferring to demonstrate their knowledge through the speaking domain.

The chat room appeared to serve as a more accessible forum for a few of the students to express their thoughts with the class. For example, Ana was an eighth grader who had been in classes with me since the sixth grade. Socially, she seemed to maintain the same small circle of friends throughout her middle school experience. I had come to know her as a quiet and compliant student, one who was conscientious about turning in her school work, but rarely initiated conversation in or out of the classroom. In the chat room, one discussion thread began with eleven posts which were coded as irrelevant to our discussion topic. These first posts were social in nature, such as:

Edwin: hey how are you

Ana: HEY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! hey well idk wat to do!

Alberto: nothing much wbu?

Ana: im good y tu

Then, Ana posted:

I think that immigration won't be a problem anymore. Wat do ya guys

think?

quickly followed by:

Yes I know I'm smart thanks ☺

Ana initiated a question to ignite discussion about the topic, and then quickly added a

sarcastic comment, perhaps as a self-deprecating way to align herself as a peer. Her

prompting launched the conversational thread into a relevant discussion, as the thirty-four

consecutive posts that followed her original posts were coded as relevant to the topic.

Some of those relevant posts read as follows:

Edwin: well it depends on president Obama

Alberto: hey what do you think is going to happen to the immigrants in the

future?

Ana: I think that a change needs to occur, one is to all immigrants need a

job and all should be treated equal.

Alberto: yeah, I want the president to help immigrants to get some jobs

Ana continued to assume the role of a discussion facilitator, posing probing

questions to her peers throughout the conversation thread. For example, in response to

Edwin's post, "well, it depends on president Obama," Ana posted the question, "Do u think that only Obama can deal with this?/or with the president after Obama???"

Collaborative Problem Solving

The online group discussions also seemed to provide a space for students to process their thinking and problem solve, as evidenced in the following excerpt:

Alberto: …what are some changes that we can do?

Claudine: they should annouce in the tv dat all immigrant who doesnt have papers should come to w. dc for a meeting and hen president obam can decus it if them

Giddiani: I think there should make a laws about if your children have papers and there mom and dad don't then I think they should let there mom and dad have papers

Claudine: Giddiani i don't think dats a gud law

Brenda: That's a good idea. I agree.

Maria: I think that the u.s. should help familys that pay taxes and don't do bad things

Claudine: yeap im agree with dat

Ana: a lot of people have been loosing their jobs and blame the problem on new immigrants

Maria: yeah me 2 i also agree with that…I think that it is NOT fair 4

people loosing their familys cause they r getting sent back 2 were they r

from

Brenda: yea they do..and then they are saying that they dont want more

immigrants to come to the united states…when immigrants had helped out

alot in the u.s.

Agentic Notions of Themselves as Immigrants

One day, I shared a piece of informational text concerning the DREAM Act

(Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act), a Congressional bill which

proposed to provide qualifying undocumented youth with a conditional path to

citizenship ("Dream Act Portal,"). The bill argued that undocumented immigrants who

came to the United States as children inherit the title of illegal immigrant/alien through

no fault of their own and therefore, deserve a chance to gain citizenship through

education or military. Initially, some students expressed skepticism, but most were

excited by the news and wanted to know more details.

Ana and Maria, two eighth graders who were undocumented, took it upon

themselves to keep the class informed on the latest updates with the proposal. They

searched the web and found newspaper articles on the DREAM Act, routinely bringing

them to class to share. Through Ana and Maria's independent research, the class learned

that the bipartisan proposal was first introduced in 2001, but had not yet come to a vote in

Congress. The girls shared that a version of the bill had failed to come to a vote the

previous spring, in March 2007, but that there were lots of undocumented immigrants

across the country who were writing to their state representatives to ask for the bill to become law. This prompted them to invite the class to participate in a letter-writing campaign to state representatives in support of passing the DREAM Act. In this way, the inquiry unit was serving as a platform for students to learn about the U.S. legal system. Through self-motivated, authentic learning about legislature that would directly affect their lives and livelihoods, students experienced the power of their collective voices through civic engagement. Significantly, another version of the bill was re-introduced in both chambers of Congress on March 26, 2009 and students came to me throughout the school day to find out whether or not it had been brought to a vote. They were understandably disappointed when Congress failed to consider it for a vote, but maintained hope that they could make a positive impact.

Becoming DREAMers

Data further reveals that students were making connections across temporal contexts. Their collective sensemaking throughout the learning unit offers examples of relating to the past, imagining the future, and engaging with the present.

Relating to the Past

As students developed greater knowledge of other immigrants' stories throughout U.S. history, the tone of their posts began to reflect pride in the immigrant identity.

> Maria: I think that immigrants help the U.S. because they work and pay taxes

> Edwin: WE ARE THE BODY OF THIS COUNTRY WE ARE THE ONES WHOMAKE THIS COUNTRY PROGRES

Edwin: I think that immigrants are a very great suprot for this country

Stephanie: …immigrants are also good workers in this country!

Hector: …immigrants also I think made American what it is. It helped it grow and communicate with other countries and also get help from them. Its all connected with migrating to other places. HELPS A LOT OF PEOPLE.

Throughout discussions and findings during the research phase, I encouraged students to consider how these histories resonated with their own knowledge and personal experiences. Much of the class was comprised of students who were first generation immigrants and they seemed to make personal connections naturally. The students who were second generation immigrants were able to recount stories they had heard from their parents or older siblings. Students shed tears of empathy upon reading chronicled experiences of oppression and hatred, many of them personally identifying with past immigrants' situations. One student, for example, shared during classroom discussion, "The person in my reading is like me because my family has discrimination when we are trying to find apartments to live." He went on to describe his memory of looking for an apartment with his mother and three younger siblings. "It is very hard on my mother because she wants for us to be safe and now I think there are some people doing bad things in our neighborhoods like drugs and stuff." Some students expressed outrage in their written journaling and oral discussions with the class, sharing feelings of disbelief that "hate could go on for so long and still keep going today." I later learned that this

work closely resembled what Kells (2007) refers to a Writing Across Communities model of writing instruction. In part, by gaining historical perspective of immigrants who came before them, students seemed to contextualize their own individual roles as part of a larger group that exists against the backdrop of history.

Imagining the Future

At the completion of their research, I invited students to respond to the gallery walk posters again, this time using a different color of sticky-note to indicate their agreement or disagreement. The class tally is represented in the chart below.

	Start of Inquiry		End of Inquiry	
Statement	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The only reason people immigrate is to find a better job.	0	16	0	16
People of Latino descent have recently begun immigrating to the United States.	15	1	0	16
People of the African/Black Race have been discriminated against more than other immigrant groups in the United States.	11	5	2	14
The United States finds immigrants to be a problem.	16	0	16	0
Life is easier once immigrants move to a new place.	8	8	0	16
People of the White Race do not immigrate to the United States.	0	16	1	15

We found that most of their thinking had inversed; a clear majority disagreed with five of the six statements. The class discussion that followed the second gallery walk included expressions of surprise at how much their thinking had changed. Of particular

interest to everyone, however, was one statement for which all students expressed agreement both at the start and at the end of the inquiry was, "The United States finds immigrants to be a problem," connoting the persistent evocation of criminality as being linked to immigrants. The unanimous consistency in the responses to this statement raised more questions and spurred our work forward.

"Why are people saying [Mexicans] are only here for drug money or to be criminals?"

"How come other people from other races are immigrating here to the U.S. but they are not thinking that [other, non-black and brown immigrants] are here for bad reasons?"

"Do people know about the immigrants' stories?"

Students were coming to acknowledge their privileged social location as people who can understand issues of power and discrimination from their own life experiences, the embodiment of what Moya (2002) refers to as "epistemic privilege." Drawing from readings and research on youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Fertig, Rios-Alers, & Seilbach, 2005; Hones, 2002; McKernan, 1996; Penuel & Freeman, 1997), I invited students to think about how their knowledge could be helpful in educating those outside our classroom. Some of the brainstormed ideas included sharing their research in an online blog or reading stories about immigration aloud to another class of students and/or teachers. One day in class, as I was instructing students to listen to some more immigrant stories, Giddiani interjected, "Wait – what about *our* stories?" and, ultimately, the class voted to write their own stories of immigration.

"Maybe if people don't know what we have to go through to be here and we tell them, they will be nicer."

"We could write down the story of how we immigrated so we could have a better life just like the other immigrants that we read about in all of the U.S.A. history."

In one online chat room discussion, a thread of conversation between three eighth grade girls revealed one student's doubt or reservation about writing their stories as a next step in our study. In response, the two other students' posts indicate confidence, conviction, and support for sharing their personal stories as a catalyst for positive change.

Linda: …there are some people that's going say awwwwwwwwww they are only kids they don't [know] noting

Stephanie: yea they might not care because we r just kids? Well they r wrong we r young ADULTS

Maria: I ALSO THINK WE CAN ALL MAKE A CHANGE ☺

Stephanie: our stories r going to be good how many times do u want me to tell u!?

Maria: …U NEVER KNOW ☺ THEY MYBE SAY "AWWWWWWWWWWWW THEY KIDS" BUT U NEVER KNOW ☺

Stephanie: yes…we know we can make a change in the world! well most likely in the U.S!!!!!

That week, students began writing their narrative histories of immigration. While I was excited and pleased that students wanted to write, this curricular move exposed an area of vulnerability for me, as I recalled previous writing units I had taught with great frustration and, what I considered to be, merely moderate success. My previous attempts to create writing assignments with cultural relevance and authenticity to students' lives seemed to lose momentum when it came to the work of putting words on paper. I feared that the motivation for learning I was witnessing in this unit would dissipate with writing activities. In retrospect, I realized that the writing curriculum I had previously presented assumed that the students either had an intrinsic desire to write or to complete whatever work was necessary to "do well" in school. In this unit, there was noticeably less resistance from students to write than I had observed in the past. In fact, once resistant writers displayed motivation and maintained momentum to write their personal narratives in the third space (Gutierrez et al., 1999) classroom environment we had created together. It occurred to me that, all throughout the unit, students had been preparing themselves for a formal piece of written work by participating in more informal writing pieces like the graffiti wall and the online journals and discussion boards, what I phrased to students as "thinking aloud" or "thinking on paper" and what Britton (1975) coined as "writing to learn". I provided a framework for learning by privileging students' wealth of linguistic, social, and cultural knowledge, but the students did the sophisticated work of comprehending challenging reading materials, making text-to-world and text-to-self connections based upon their social location and lived experiences, and then applying that new knowledge to a self-directed task of essay writing. Supporting what Kells calls a cultural ecology approach to a Writing Across Communities model of learning (quoted

in Guerra, 2008), I told students that I was more interested in the content that they created than on language conventions; in other words, students were encouraged to express their thinking in the language and formality most comfortable to them. It was crucial for me to be explicit in legitimizing all the languages and literacies the students brought to the classroom and the work, as the normal school discourse students had come to know only allowed one "official" way of using language. By allowing use of informal registers in our work, students' prior knowledge (including home language use) and social locations were utilized as resources for responding to work within the school context (Gutierrez et al., 1999). I observed adolescent English language learners displaying enthusiasm and urgency about their written work, wanting their pieces to be perfect. Therefore, once their thoughts were well developed, it was a natural transition to work on the language conventions used in academic discourse.

Engaging with the Present

We practiced peer editing, another writing task that had previously proven unfruitful. This dually served as an opportunity for students to strengthen their English language development, as well as learn about each other's stories, thus, strengthening the sense of community in our class. I, too, was learning the stories of my students and their families in a more personal way than their cumulative files or prescriptive lessons could offer. Each of their stories allowed me to better appreciate and advocate for their families' daily choices and sacrifices.

As the stories were nearing completion, generative conversations about the potential legacy of the stories continued between classmates and with me, both in and out

of the classroom setting. Again, the online environment provided a forum for student

discussions:

> Ana: I think our stories will help support DREAM ACT and thats a good
> thing
>
> Brenda: yea i think [writing our stories] will work because we should also
> get an opportunity to be here and go to the university and be able to do
> more…I hope that our immigration stories can help
>
> Maria: I THINK THAT OUR STORY WOULD CHANGE PEOPLE
> MIND BECAUSE IT COMING FROM KIDS THAT ARE IN SCHOOL
> AND HAVE FAMILY THAT ARE IMMIGRATION
>
> Linda: mybe other kids can wirte their story too
>
> Marta: I think that if all of the people read r storys they could change their
> minds
>
> Stephanie: Yeah, it might change if other people read it because they will
> see that we do want to be something in the future for the U.S.!!! so it
> might change how immigrants are viewed!!!!!(:
>
> Brenda: they should help people's minds about immigrants because us the
> immigrants helped alot and we always try our best to get a job and learn
> English and stuff…
>
> Edwin: I think the storys from my classmates will change this immigration
> problem a lot

Nadine: I think that ppl will understand how immigrants feel to be in this country and why they decided to came ova here.! ☺ ....

Jorge: I think that our stories would change other peoples opinions

Linda: we need to let people know that immigrants need help and we can help [the country] in a lot ways

Ana: Maybe if they read the stories, they might think positive and maybe change things around [for passing] the DREAM ACT

In a private online message to me, Marta communicated:

I like the way that we write our story because it a way that we got to know each other. But i would like to do a book with all of the class students stories. And sent it to Mr. Obama so he can know a little about us. I was taking to Edwin at lunch and he told me that we should all write to Mr. Obama to tell [him] how we all feel about immigration.

This particular communication revealed that students were thinking and generating ideas together outside of the classroom context. They implicitly acknowledged their roles as contributors to the curriculum and direction of the work and offered logical and meaningful suggestions for sharing the class' work. Moreover, their idea to send their stories to the president revealed the perception of their collective agency for affecting change.

The study took place during a significant election year, when Barack Obama was elected as the first African-American president of the United States. The fact that Obama

continually emerged as a topic of conversation within our inquiry acknowledges the students' awareness of civics, but also the influence of race in political rhetoric. Their comments hint at an understanding of a power structure in which racial affinity amongst people of color may play a beneficial role.

During the process of negotiating how to share our collective learning, I became aware of my own biases with respect to the current immigration reform advocacy efforts. Some students queried about student-led protests they had heard or read about and we discussed them in class. A few students expressed interest in participating in protests going on in the city, asking me to join them. I struggled with this invitation. In one respect, I understood the allure of a protest, especially for youth who were hungry to be heard. A protest had potential for an empowering experience, and yet, it seemed to carry significant risk – for both the students and for me. Students risked arrest and/or deportation for themselves and their families; I risked the economic security of my employment. While I strongly believed in advocating for pathways which led to their lawful presence in the United States, on the continuum of advocacy versus activism, my comfort level leaned heavily towards the former. These competing pressures illuminated Monhanty's reflections on the complicated process of decolonizing pedagogical practice: "…such teaching must address questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation while retaining a focus on the material being taught. Teaching practices must also combat the pressures of professionalization, normalization, and standardization, the very pressures or expectations that implicitly aim to manage and discipline pedagogies so that teacher behaviors are predictable (and perhaps controllable)…" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 202). Throughout the unit, I tried to maintain a neutral political stance in the classroom, but

working with these student scholars provided a platform for me to more fully understand Freire and Giroux's philosophical underpinnings – teaching, in and of itself, is a political act. The experience forced me to consider how and when I could or should be fully transparent with them about my own political views and activities.

Somewhat to my relief, I did not have to overtly interject my own political views very often; by second semester, the students had largely become proficient and comfortable self-regulating productive discussions. Students who had emerged as leaders in the class convinced the interested few that protests were not in everyone's best interest. Even still, the relief I felt over this decision was unsettling at the time. I was torn between wanting to support political resistance and avoiding detrimental risk. I wrestled over whether or not I had inadvertently implied that I wouldn't be willing to take a risk with them, for them.

Students completed their personal narratives and, almost unanimously, voted to self-publish a book of their stories under the title, *Different Worlds: Stories of Immigrant Youth by Immigrant Youth* (Greene, 2009). At first, I experienced mild disappointment with, what seemed to me to be, a "less risky" option of publishing their stories in a book. The act seemed to align too neatly with the expectations of dominant culture--the curricular expectations of school and the behavioral expectations of society at large. I felt troubled by the potential presence of systemic bias in this curricular decision and questioned if I had led them to choose a path of least resistance, a path of cowardice, even immorality.

Moreover, I was surprised by the students' decision to publish a paper copy of their stories; given the students' regular interest and engagement in the digital world, I assumed they would opt for one of the online publication ideas they had discussed, like a DREAMers Blog or a page on our class website. Here, too, I wondered about my own unintended influences: did a paper copy of a book seem "less risky" than an online publication, as it would potentially have a smaller readership audience, and were students following what they assumed were my wishes? Upon further reflection with students, I came to understand the significance of printed words on paper for them. In a society that labels them as "undocumented," documenting their stories in a tangible form was a liberating and empowering act. Further, it later occurred to me that the students and I had accomplished that difficult task of working against and within the same system; that their politically-contested self-interests in resisting dominant power structures which held them back from a legal, sustainable future in the U.S. were, in fact, best protected by their choice to express themselves in ways that the dominant culture would find most palatable. They had taken on the concept of third space in the way Bhabha (1994) had theorized it- insisting on an identity of difference while resisting assimilation and marginalization.

Through analyzing the events of our curricular unit of study, a third-space-imagined-community (in the way I had first conceived of it) provided a helpful structure for understanding the ways that student-led inquiry allowed for powerful learning. Within a traditionally teacher-led space, students accepted the invitation to lead their own learning, becoming agents of the curriculum. They gained perspective and critical awareness of their place on the historical timeline of U.S. immigration and race relations,

learning that inequitable circumstances have evolved over time. They came to

understand themselves as significant participants in history and committed to developing

their own potential as agents of change.

In the next chapter, I will offer analyses of the students' personal narratives,

contextualizing them with my field notes.

Chapter 4: "What about *Our* Stories?"

Through what seemed like a chance encounter, I learned about a significant event in one student's immigration experience while we were on our way to a field trip. While most of my middle school students were clustered in seats around the rear emergency exit door of the bus, Edwin chose a seat adjacent to mine, in the front row. I was preoccupied with attendance charts and field trip materials. Pensively looking out the window of the school bus, Edwin turned and asked me, "Miss, is this the highpoint?" I looked up briefly and acknowledged that 'Highpoint' was the name of the street we were on. Instantly, he sat upright, his eyes beaming with enthusiasm. "Then this is the McDonald's where I meet my mother for the first time!" pointing out the window. I was disoriented and caught off guard by his statement. Refocusing my attention to him, I inquired further, trying to understand what he was telling me. He explained that a *coyote* led him from Guatemala to the United States and brought him to that McDonald's restaurant on Highpoint Street to be reunited with his mother.

In the moment, I was struck by the way he was describing McDonald's as a sacred place. As he affectionately stared out the window at the fast food establishment, it seemed he was replaying the memory of that significant reunion in his mind. As if defying the conventions of physical space and time, the mere sight of this McDonald's restaurant seemed to transport him back to the day he arrived to that place; and if only invited through association, I felt deeply honored to be present there, in his moment of remembering. It was my first insight into the importance of storying and the core impetus for me to support the students in their later request to write their stories of immigration.

Interpreting Students' Stories

Guided by Giddiani's probing question, "What about *our* stories?", the 16 students wrote personal narratives of their immigration stories and compiled them into a self-published book, Different Worlds: Stories of Immigrant Youth by Immigrant Youth (Greene, 2009). I used content analysis to look for emerging themes within each independent story, and contextualized the meaning of the students' writing with my field notes on each individual student. Lastly, I considered which concepts were represented most frequently across all the stories.

Emergent themes from the individual stories were collapsed into thirteen categories: bilingualism, communalism, critical awareness, disclaiming immigrant identity, empathy, empowerment, gratitude, isolation, loss and longing, risk, optimism, pride (in immigrant identity), and uncertainty. For each of the times these themes were represented in students' work, they were then entered into the Wordle applet (Feinberg, 2013), which "uses the number of times a word appears in a text to determine its relative size." In this way, a visual representation of resounding themes across the sixteen stories was generated.
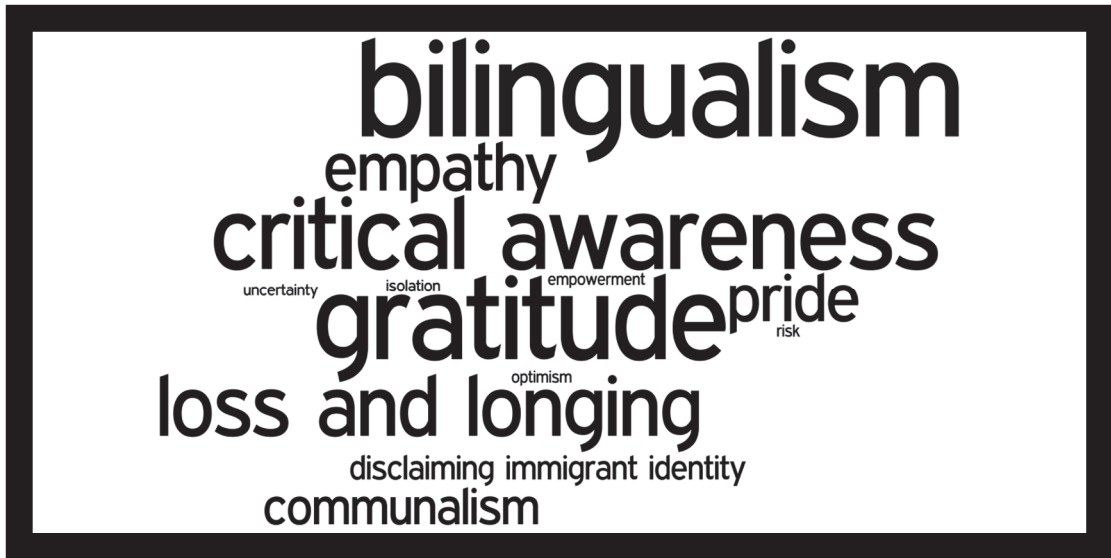
A cursory look at the Wordle image reveals the themes most often represented in the students' narratives: bilingualism, gratitude, critical awareness, loss and longing, empathy, and pride. These themes emerged from first- and second-generation immigrant students alike; documented-status (for themselves nor their families) did not appear to play a significant role in students' assertions. The themes also appeared across students' gender and age/grade-level.

Throughout the year, the students developed and demonstrated critical awareness of hegemonic forces which stereotyped them by skin color and language. As opposed to conceptualizing themselves in ways that might reify deficit-based stereotypes, they used their awareness to develop and express notions of themselves and their immigrant families in affirming ways, emotionally mature ways, asset-based ways, and ways that advocate for support of their cultural and linguistic identities.

Notions of Affirmation (pride and gratitude)

Despite anti-immigrant sentiments expressed in local and national news, students articulated pride in themselves and their families. Stephanie expressed pride in her mother, acknowledging her skill and work ethic.

> My mom worked in an office for a couple of months, and when she didn't have any other work, she made cakes, flan, and gelatin. Then, when I got home from school, I would help my mom sell it in the neighborhood. Our neighbors bought a lot of *pasteles* because my mom is so good at baking. Now, she is thinking of starting her own restaurant. My whole family would work there. I think that would be a cool experience…to have my whole family working together, feeding our community delicious *pasteles*….I thank my mom for working so hard and trying to give me the best she can, like food, clothes, and shelter.

Stephanie identified baking as a skill in which her mother excelled and incited in entrepreneurial ways. Stephanie's participation in selling her mother's baked goods demonstrates a sense of communalism, further reinforced by their plan to open a family restaurant in which all of the women of the family would work together. Her gratitude for her mother's work ethic is demonstrated in the way she expressed thanks for simple, life-sustaining needs – food, clothes, and shelter. Similarly, Stephanie expressed pride in her own identity as a Latina who is bilingual, indicating that having knowledge of two languages is an economic asset.

Giddiani was also able to identify aspects of his and his family's cultural ways of knowing as assets, such as their language and food. He expressed appreciation for his hyphenated identity, his bilingual abilities, the opportunity to be an agent in helping his parents to learn English, and his mother's cooking skills. He wrote about the ways that his Mexican-American identity engenders a sense of pride for him.

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> I like being Mexican-American because I can understand other bilingual people that speak Spanish and English. I get to help my parents learn to speak English. Also, I love the food. My mom is the best cook.

Claudine expressed pride in herself and her parents for their multilingual abilities.

> I speak six languages: …and I am learning English. My mom and my dad come from different races. My mom…has light colored skin and speaks more language that I do! My dad…is black, just like me, and speaks more languages that *everyone* in my family.

This linguistic asset served her well academically. Her English proficiency score on the LAS Links was a Level 1 when she arrived as a sixth grader and her multilingualism, coupled with strong formal schooling background, aided her rapid linguistic growth, as she scored an overall Level 3 just one year later in the seventh grade.

In her personal narrative, Nadine expressed gratitude for her parents' decision to come to the United States.

> I think my parents made a good choice to immigrate to the U.S. because now they have a better life, not like in Mexico where they struggled a lot. In addition, my brother and I have a better life, a good education, and we speak two languages-Spanish and English. I think that this will help us understand people and have a good future….I am proud of my parents for coming to the U.S. and for giving so much effort for us.

She identified that working and living in the United States afforded her family certain assets that would have been difficult to obtain in Mexico. She also expressed appreciation for her bilingualism, indicating that it will offer opportunities for her to "understand people and have a good future," referring to the ways that communication with more people and a broader spectrum of jobs become possible when one knows more than one language.

Maria wrote about how hard she worked to learn English after moving to the United States: "All that practice paid off for me and now, I know how to speak English fluently." Brenda and Melanie, both first generation immigrants, recognized the benefits of sufficient employment opportunities for their parents in the United States which allowed for a more sustainable living:

> Brenda: "I like living here in the United States because my dad has a good job, my sister and I have a good education, and because we have lots of friends."

> Melanie: "…I notice how much things have changed for me and my life. In Mexico, we did not have very much because we could not afford it. In the US, my parents have work, so they can afford to buy us things."

Likewise, Giddianai, Marta, and Nadine, all second generation immigrants, confidently asserted pride in their cultural self-identification.

> Giddiani: "I like being Mexican-American…"

> Marta: "I'm proud to be a Latina here…"

> Nadine: "I am happy for who I am and where I came from. I am happy to be here and also for being who I am…Mexican-American."

Students' expressions of gratitude were abundant and most often were directed towards their parents. Linda wrote:

I always like to tell my mom, "*Gracias por venir a los Estados Unidos*!" because if not, I would not have been born here. I don't really have to worry about having papers, and I can get a good education here, and go to college without any worries…. I can go to school [now] even if I cannot afford to go.

Similarly, Stephanie recognized her mother's work ethic and shared, "I thank my mom for working so hard and trying to give me the best she can, like food, clothes, and shelter." Maria stated, "I feel so happy and blessed that my parents decided to bring us to the U.S. because I have more opportunities than I would have in Mexico." Nadine articulated her approval of her parents' decision as it related to them and their children: "I think my parents made a good choice to immigrate to the U.S. because now they have a better life, not like in Mexico where they struggled a lot. I am proud of my parents for coming to the U.S. and for giving so much effort for us." Ana and Hector expressed their thankfulness for U.S. schooling.

Ana: "I really like it here….I get to go to school here and I have a great education."

Hector: "…I am having fun [at this school]. I am a percussionist in the band, which, in my opinion, is much more advanced than other bands I've played in."

Notions of Emotional Maturity (loss and longing and empathy)

Students' writing revealed their ability to articulate a range of emotions: those of deep loss through having to leave loved ones, or else, having to sacrifice in some other significant way; longing or homesickness for the safety and comfort of people and places; and empathy with others who have experienced hardship.

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Lola was mostly quiet during whole group discussions, but her engagement in the topic of immigration was evident; she constructed a 14-page first draft of her immigration story and diligently made revisions to it every day until the day we had to submit it for publication. Even then, she was not completely satisfied with the final version of the story because it was "not perfect."

I intuited that remembering and writing about her immigration story was painful for her, a sense later confirmed in an interview with her (see chapter 5). The overall tone of her story is that of sadness. She started her story:

> I was born in Mexico. When I was just a baby, my parents had to go to the USA to find work, so they left me and my brother and sister with my grandparents.

The phrase "*just a* baby" invokes a sense of incomprehension that parents would leave their child behind. Yet, she carefully chose to say that her "parents **had to go** to the USA to find work" as opposed to saying "my parents **left** for the USA," which acknowledges her mature comprehension of the family's dire situation and empathy for how difficult a decision that must have been for her parents. She went on to describe the homesickness she was experiencing, having to be away from the grandparents who played a central role in her early childhood.

> Sometimes, even now, I still dream that I am in Mexico with my grandparents, cousins, and uncle and I feel bad. My heart feels like someone threw an arrow through it.

Emotionally mature for his age, Edwin's contributions throughout the inquiry unit

demonstrated his capacity to empathize with others. This was perhaps best exemplified

in the final version of his story when he described the day he had to leave his

grandparents, who had raised him in El Salvador, in order to join his mother in the United

States:

> I saw [my grandmother's] face; it showed that her heart was breaking in a
> million pieces. I tried my best to not cry, even though I usually cry when
> something sad happens. I did not want her to feel even sadder, so I held
> back my tears.

While Edwin acknowledges the sadness of his departure, he did not dwell on

negative emotional descriptors. He quickly moved on in his writing to describe the

remarkable adventure of his immigration, which included a great deal of walking, hitch-

hiking, and clandestine travel in the suffocating luggage compartment of a bus. He

concludes his story with characteristic optimism and enthusiasm:

> I saw her there standing in front of the McDonalds on [Highpoint Street],
> waiting for me – my mom! My heart was beating faster than 500 miles a
> minute. It was the happiest day of my life and I hope it will remain this
> happy for the rest of my life. I started school here…and I LOVE it.

Like several of her first generation immigrant classmates, Melanie's story of

immigration included dangerous and uncertain circumstances necessitated by economic

hardship in Mexico. Her parents immigrated to the U.S. to establish employment and

housing, leaving Melanie and her siblings with a relative in Mexico. About one year

later, her mother returned to Mexico to accompany her children to the U.S. with the help

of a coyote. Melanie recalled the fear she felt in the midst of their precarious travels and

the strikingly mature coping strategy she relied upon to help her survive the dangerous

experience.

> We got to the border and had to wait until it was dark to cross over. My
> mom gave us money just in case the *cholos* caught us. She said that if
> they caught us, they could do really bad stuff, so I felt nervous and scared.
> She instructed us to give them all the money if we got caught. *El coyote*
> grabbed my hand to help protect me from the *cholos*. While we were
> walking, big thorns prickled and stuck to my knee and a snake crossed in
> front of us. My aunt had to carry me because my leg hurt so badly. Of
> course, I couldn't cry because *el coyote* said we had to stay quiet. I
> remember looking at the sky. The new moon was shining brightly. I
> asked God to help us pass *la frontera*.

She expressed appreciation for her ameliorated circumstances, but not without

acknowledging the homesickness she felt for her family in Mexico.

> Now that I've lived [here] for four years, I notice how much things have
> changed for me and my life. In Mexico, we did not have very much
> because we could not afford it. In the US, my parents have work, so they
> can afford to buy us things. Now, I have more clothes and they are
> prettier than the ones I had in Mexico, the ones with holes and rips in
> them. Still, I miss my family in Mexico and hope I can see them again
> someday.

Stephanie expressed empathy towards her mother, recognizing some of the

sacrifices she had to make in order to improve their lives. In writing about one of her

strongest memories, she recalled:

> …my mom received a call from Mexico; it was my aunt calling to tell us
> that my grandparents had died the night before. My mom was depressed
> for a whole month or two….I also felt depressed; I cried with her when
> she started to cry. She had wanted to go see her parents because they were

in bad conditions, but she didn't go because it would have been too hard and too much money to take all three of us.

Of note, Claudine commented that there were differing races within her African family, and based her statement on the premise of skin color. This was striking for me because I recalled that within weeks of her arrival at our school, she asked me about race in America; she questioned, "Miss, why is race such a big deal to Americans?" Through ongoing conversations, I learned that she had not thought of herself as Black until she moved to the United States. After living in the United States for a few weeks, Claudine recognized race as a social construction of identity. This realization impressed upon her the importance of skin color as a way to categorize and identify one's self. Conversations about race were ongoing with Claudine as she negotiated what it meant for her to have dark coloring in the U.S., but not feel affinity with African American girls at school. Not surprisingly, then, another theme that emerged in Claudine's writing was that of isolation. She conveyed the loneliness she feels being the only person in the school from her continent.

> My life in the United States is not easy. The education is different and nobody speaks my languages. I am the only African at school and nobody knows where I come from.

Hector's story revealed that he and his cousin were raised by their grandparents in the Philippines, while their parents worked in Japan. In his narrative, he recounted the many transitions he and his family made when he was a baby:

My parents met in Saipan, where they were working together at a restaurant. They had me there in Saipan and we lived there for one year together. Then, we moved to Japan, but I only stayed there for one week. My parents both had to work two jobs, so my grandfather brought me to the Philippines without my parents.

He lived with his grandfather until age six, when his parents found better work. The influence of his grandfather was perhaps passed on to Hector, as he uniquely displayed wisdom beyond his years in class discussions and in his writing. For example, he exhibited self-deprecating humor when reflecting upon the consequences of his parents' gifts to him while they were separated:

> …my parents tried hard to make me feel good by sending me stuff from Japan, but it just made me spoiled, now am trying to get rid of the spoiled attitude.

Likewise, he was able to reflect on the negative actions of other kids, such as an instance of bullying in which Hector was a victim. In the following excerpt from his personal narrative, he offered his critique on the event:

> My third-grade year was brutal!...I got beat up by some older kids. They tried stealing my bike….My mom and dad went to their parents' houses and told them what have happened. Ever since then, they have gotten a little more mature…

Accounts of loss or sacrifice are witnessed in the following students' narratives:

Melanie: "I was sad not to see [my mom] for three years."

Maria: "I remember saying good-bye to my grandma and cousins and seeing my grandma cry….I didn't realize that we were going to a whole different country and that I wasn't going to see them again."

Alberto: "My immigration story starts with my dad's story…about his childhood and how he suffered…and what he did to get to the United States."

Linda: "My dad is always telling me to stay in school no matter what happens because he didn't get to stay in school, but he wishes he did."

Ana: "…my dad was rough on [my mom]. So my Grandma, my mom and I left without my dad knowing."

Certain expressions of empathy in students' stories additionally seemed to correlate with instances of loss and longing, suggesting that the experience of loss and longing contributed to students' ability to empathize. One example of this is Edwin's recollection of parting from his grandmother and holding back his tears so as not to further upset her. Similarly, Stephanie's memory of her grandparents' deaths prompted her to "cry when [her mother] cried," knowing that her mother had ached to see her parents before their deaths.

Notions of Bilingualism as an Asset

Linda viewed her bilingual abilities as skill, but noted that she did not feel she could use her home language, Spanish, at school. Interestingly, she positioned herself as

a holder of knowledge, while describing her teachers' language knowledge as insufficient to understand the Spanish language.

> At home, I sometimes speak Spanish, but at school, I only speak English. I cannot speak Spanish to my teachers because they won't understand anything I'm saying.

In Marta's case, it is interesting to note that her mother's desire to claim U.S. citizenship for her daughter did not imply disclaiming the family's Mexican roots. Marta expressed appreciation and pride when describing the origin of her name which came "from the [Mexican] women in my family." She also viewed her bilingual abilities as helpful to her Latina identity development, as well as to the largely monolingual community in which she lived.

> I use both of my languages everyday and I can help translate for people
>
> who only know one language….I'm proud to be a Latina here…

Like several of her peers, Maria recognized her bilingualism as a skill in which she took pride, particularly because she had to be self-disciplined and work diligently to learn English. In her narrative, she detailed the difficulty she experienced when she first began schooling in the U.S. She recalled feeling confused and scared, as she could not understand anything that the other students were saying.

> I felt like an outsider. I felt like I would never get used to living in the U.S. Learning English, at first, was difficult. I had to practice and practice….All that practice paid off for me and now, I know how to speak English fluently.

Brenda and Claudine both pointed to the significant literacy-based knowledge and legacy of languages represented in their families.

Brenda: "…my parents tried to help my sister and me the best they could. While my dad was helping my sister and me with English, my mom taught us how to read, write, and speak in Spanish."

Claudine: "I speak six languages...and I am learning English….My mom…speaks more languages than I do! My dad…speaks more languages than *everyone* in my family."

Bilingual abilities were also cited as sources of affinity and belonging for students:

Linda: "I have many Hispanic friends…we are all bilingual."

Hector: "…there is another American-born Filipino [at our school]! I met her and asked her where she was from and if she spoke Tagalog. She said she could speak a little bit of the language…. It has made a big difference for me!"

It was striking to note instances in which students acknowledged their bilingualism as a skill which could be employed as a service to others.

Marta: "I use both of my languages everyday and I can help translate for people who only know one language."

Giddiani: "I can understand other bilingual people that speak Spanish and English. I get to help my parents learn to speak English."

Nadine: "…my brother and I…speak two languages-Spanish and English. I think that this will help us understand people..."

Notions of Advocacy

Lola exhibited critical awareness of contemporary rhetoric which stressed the importance of political boundaries.

> It is so hard for me not to see my grandparents when I miss them. I hope
>
> that one day the Americas will not have borders…

Judiciously, she resisted the notion of borders, referring to the two countries she called "home" – Mexico and the United States – as one unit, "the Americas." Her privileged perspective on the confining nature of the border parallels Anzaldua's (1987) criticism on borderlands, in which she asserts that the political border between Mexico and the United States has sociological and psychological implications.

Edwin was passionate and justice-driven. He viewed himself and other immigrants in asset-based ways. At the start of the year, for example, he posted the following comments in an online classroom discussion:

> Don't people know that [immigrants] have been coming to this country for opportunities for a long time? We are hard workers and we come here to have a better life and to have more educations and opportunities for the childrens.
>
> I think that if Obama becomes the president, then he will help the immigrants because he has immigrants in his family and he knows we are not here to be criminals.

Alberto exuded self-confidence, which was sometimes interpreted as arrogance by his peers. This was especially apparent during class conversations about personal identity. Alberto actively resisted the label of immigrant, choosing to identify simply as

"American." During one conversation about the origin of our names, he shared how he was named after the Honduran men in his family, but quickly qualified his statement with, "But I was born here, so I'm practically White." This "White American" identity claim created some tension amongst the students; the majority of his classmates proudly claimed hyphenated identities with another nationality. Some students viewed Alberto's identity claim as "selling out" or disrespecting his native heritage. An excerpt from his personal narrative helps to explain his identity claim:

> Even though I was born in the United States of America, many people think I am not a citizen because of my race. It makes me mad sometimes because they make assumptions about who I am and what I am capable of becoming. They don't know that I am an honor roll student and that I play the violin and that I am a really good soccer player.

Alberto's writing alludes to what he had recognized as negative connotations associated with immigrants, particularly those who aren't White. He had a critical awareness of the crucial role that race plays in gaining social capital in US culture and was able to identify some of the specific aspects of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) which helped him gain access to dominant culture, like claiming the identities of being "practically White," an honor roll student, a soccer player, a violinist. For Alberto, these identities were important, as they contributed to his life trajectory. His future aspirations included "finishing high school and going to college to study medicine and learn about mechanics." Notably, he would be the first in his family to graduate from high school and to pursue higher education in medicine. Even still, he gestures his appreciation for the mechanical work through which his father made a living.

Though Marta's father was U.S.-born, he was raised in Mexico, like her Mexican-born mother. They met and were married in Mexico, and later, moved to the United States together. The fact that her parents claim differing citizenships was significant to Marta's immigration story, as exemplified through the precarious circumstances of own birth. During her pregnancy, Marta's mother had gone to Mexico to visit family.

> When [my mother] was six months pregnant [with me], she began her journey back to Texas…and on the way, her water broke! The man that was bringing her back asked my mom if she wanted to stay in Mexico or try to go across the border. My mom said, "Vamonos! Let's go!"

Knowing the implications associated with a U.S. citizenship, Marta's mother made the choice to risk her own health in order for her baby to be born in the U.S. Similar to other students' stories of immigration, this account stressed the significance of the border as a place of political, sociological, and psychological consequences. Marta recognized her mother's decision to cross the border as a risk worth taking.

Ana was two-years-old when she crossed the border with her grandmother and mother, a point she felt was important to include in her story in order to relay that she had no choice in the decision to immigrate. The purposeful inclusion of this information was a direct reference to myriad class discussions and readings we reviewed on the DREAM Act. Some of the wording in the bill, which advocates for children who immigrated "through no fault of their own," troubled Ana. Knowing the brave and difficult decision her mother had to make, she felt she needed to defend their right to be in the United States as social and economic refugees, demonstrating her ability to compassionately

empathize with her mother with a keen and critical awareness of the sociopolitical

tensions that border crossing incited.

> My mom told me that she wanted to leave [Mexico] because my dad was
> rough on her. So my Grandma, my mom and I left without my dad
> knowing.

Ana shared that there was little work available to women in Mexico, and without

the financial support of her father, her mother was left with few options for survival.

Their circumstances were those of escape from an oppressive system of gender

discrimination in terms of limited support resources available for domestic abuse victims,

as well as limited employment opportunities for women. Their immigration, then, could

be characterized as an empowering decision to change the negative trajectory of their

lives.

To offer perspective for the level of desperation her family was experiencing, Ana

went on to describe the uncertainty and danger they faced while crossing the border. She

was sent on an airplane with another family, while her mother and grandmother crossed

on land with the help of a coyote.

> [My grandma] asked [some people she knew] to help me get to the USA
> safely…. I remember having to learn their names so that I could travel
> with them on the plane. I had to give the security man the information that
> supposedly, I was their daughter, to prove that I knew them…. Later, my
> mom told me…that the immigration officers had caught her, but not my
> grandma. My mom was sent to jail on her birthday…with the people who
> were crossing the border with her….The immigration officers took her
> money, and the birthday piñata that her friends had given her. She stayed
> in jail for two days…[she] felt really sad and tired.

Though their circumstances were bleak in Mexico, the decision to immigrate to the U.S. was not an easy one; it held great risk for all of them. According to the account she received from her mother, they were separated for several months upon arriving to the U.S.

> I stayed in Texas for about two or three months with the people who brought me on the plane. Then, I went to California where I finally saw my mom and grandma.

The circumstances she shared in her personal narrative described the heart-wrenching, dichotomy she faced as an undocumented immigrant who had been living and going to school in the United States for 12 years.

> I really like it here. I have a lot of friends at school, and most of my family lives here too. I get to go to school here and I have a great education….I want everyone to be proud of themselves for what they have done to come to the U.S. because there are thousands of people coming to the U.S. for a better life. I know that I have more opportunities in the U.S. than in Mexico, so for now I'm trying to live a good life here.

> Even after living in the US for many years…it does not make me feel like a citizen….Not being a citizen makes me feel like I don't deserve to live here in the USA.

The notion she introduces of "being a citizen" is complex. The dictionary definition of citizen, a native or naturalized member of a state or other political community, is notably inclusive of naturalized members of the community-those who have lived in a place for an extended period of time under legal means. Ana hinted at pervasive anti-immigrant rhetoric, however, which would have people believe that the

'naturalized' members of a community are not as legitimate as those who are native-born, and fails to recognize the circumstances of children who immigrated unwittingly.

Maria expressed gratitude for her parents and the opportunity to live in the United States, despite missing Mexico.

> The United States has been my home for a long time. I wish to return to Mexico, but I know that I could not get used to living there because they are two totally different places for me. I feel so happy and blessed that my parents decided to bring us to the U.S. because I have more opportunities than I would have in Mexico.

Her statement about wanting the freedom to visit Mexico, but not wanting to live there, referenced a common class discussion about the DREAM Act and suggested her critical awareness of sociopolitical events. Ana had heard about some local students who risked deportation. Like many of the students in our class, the students she discussed had lived most of their lives in the U.S. In class, Maria was vocal about the injustice of deporting children, noting that she and her sisters had never gone to school in Mexico and had no friends in Mexico. Indeed, one of the supporting arguments in the DREAM Act proposal cites the negative economic and ethical implications of deporting children who have spent the majority of their lives in formal U.S. schooling. Regardless of their legal status, children who have learned English and who have been culturally indoctrinated in U.S. customs, who have been enrolled in and who have used U.S. schooling resources are best positioned to, then, graduate and contribute to the U.S. work force or military. According to this logic, deportation does not benefit any of the parties involved.

At the start of the inquiry unit, Giddiani indicated his frustrations about the

current immigration rhetoric. He used the word "racist" liberally and with frequency in

our daily discussions. Two examples of his contributions follow:

> Why people be saying that just because someone speaks Spanish they're
> illegal? That's racist!

> It's so racist that people be calling all the Mexicans illegals like they're
> criminals or something. I'm Mexican AND I was born here, but people be
> thinking that I'm gonna be selling drugs or something. Man, it's not right.

In the final version of his story and in his end-of-unit reflection, he refined his

viewpoint on racism. As opposed to earlier statements, which were accusatory of others,

he was able to express his perceptions about race from the perspective of how racist

rhetoric makes him feel and base it on personal experiences.

> I hate how [some people] put all the immigrants together [and] say that
> they are lazy because some work real hard just to feed their family and
> take care of them.

> The only bad thing about being Mexican in the United States is that some
> people are racist. I think some people don't really see *me*; they only see
> the color of my skin. It makes me feel mad because people assume that all
> Mexicans do not have papers or do not deserve to live here.

Nadine's advocacy for dual language abilities was evidenced in her description of

the negative perceptions of Spanish language she witnessed within her school

environment. She promoted the freedom to use native languages without restriction or

punishment.

> I…hate that some Americans tell the Hispanics to not speak in Spanish.
> When I speak in Spanish, some people are afraid that I am talking about

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them. They also say that it is annoying to hear us talk Spanish. It also makes me mad that some teachers don't let us use our language at school. I think that we should have the freedom to talk in our native language because we grew up speaking Spanish and we are used to it.

While each student wrote his/her own personal narrative, the end products were very much collaborative pieces of work. Beyond the decision to compile their stories together into one book, the collection of stories was also a collective story of our third-space-imagined-community. Each student's writing was infused with input from new perspectives they gained, dialogical exchanges they engaged, and academic challenges they accepted. Their end-of-unit writing revealed the depth of their individual and collective understanding and development of their immediate social environment.

Their written personal narratives indicated an active resistance of hegemonic stereotypes, as they expressed pride in themselves and their parents. Their words revealed maturity in the constructive expressions of traumatic life events and indications of high emotional intelligence. Students conceived of themselves and their families as individuals and groups with assets to offer to others and agency to self-identify.

Chapter 5: Writing for Regeneration

The printed, self-published books became part of several of the school district's classroom libraries, as well as the main library of EMS. Copies were sent to the guests who came to speak with our class about their immigration stories, as well as the newly elected President Obama, per the students' suggestions. In the years since its publication, it has been used in undergraduate and graduate university courses as well as national and international education conferences as an example of ESL student-led work, authentic student engagement with narrative writing, culturally relevant and responsive teaching and learning, and education on immigrant students and their families.

One year after the book's publication, some of the students who participated in the inquiry project continued to engage me in conversations about how their stories helped them think through personal and global issues of immigration and racial disparity. At the time, I was on an educational sabbatical from the school site to complete the residency year of doctoral studies. I continued to communicate informally with them via email and social media, as well as during visits I made to the school for formal interviews and informal observations.

Invitations to Reflect

Wanting to further understand the writing experiences of ESL students, I arranged for reflective interviews with some of the student authors. Of the 16 student authors, eight remained at the middle school; the other eight students had advanced to high school. Three of the eight middle school students assented to be interviewed outside of school: Lola, Marta, and Nadine.

Also during the school year that followed the book's publication, some of the district's high school ESL teachers asked if the student authors and I would come speak to their ESL classes about the writing process.   Ana and Linda, both of whom were freshman in high school at that time, as well as Edwin, who was an eighth grader at the time, accepted the invitation. Prior to our visit, the high school English language learners had read the students' stories with their teachers. They were prepared with questions related to the content and the process of the writing the book.

Themes that emerged from the reflective conversations one year after the inquiry unit were: development as a writer, development of emotional maturity, and development as agent of change.

Development as a Writer

As with other aspects of identity development, one's concept of self is not static; it evolves with myriad biological, environmental, and psychological factors. When I interviewed Lola one year after the inquiry unit, she described the differences she noticed between her writing experiences during the immigration project and the writing experience she was having in her English class around the time of the interview.

> Practitioner-Researcher (PR): So, I recently went back and read [the book of immigration stories].

> Lola: Yeah, I am reading them too.

> PR: I'm so impressed with the work you guys did! The stories are really interesting.

> Lola: Yeah, everybody did a good job with the writing.

PR: What about you? Do you consider yourself to be a good writer?

Lola: Well, right now, like in seventh grade? Not that much. But, like, in sixth grade, you helped me, so I did…

PR: Hmmm…can you say more about that?

Lola: Well, like, yeah, you helped me a lot of times…you teach me the…paragraphing and how to get ideas organized…

…PR: So how is your writing experience this year different from your experience last year?

Lola: Well, I remember peer reading [from last year]…that was fun, too, because we got the chance to read other people's ideas and so we can give them ideas too, and corrections…I enjoyed reading my friends' stories and where they came from…to see how people are.

PR: What was it like to share your story with your classmates?

Lola: Well, at first, I was a little scared….But some of them told me [my writing] was good, and I was, like, "Okay, I did well!"…

…PR: So, I hear you saying that you appreciated having interactions with the teacher and your classmates and friends – those were things that helped you think through your writing?

Lola: Yeah. Well, there's one more thing. I remember talking about it with [my sister]. I told her, "Okay…you need to help me remember what

happened [during their immigration] because I don't remember

everything."…

…So [my sister] helped me remember lots of parts that I didn't remember

happening.

In this interview excerpt, Lola notes that the writing environment made a difference in the way she thought about herself as a writer. She identified the significance of the teacher-student and peer relationships in helping her to develop her work, implying the sense of trust she experienced in being able to share her work for critique, assessment, and development in the third-space-imagined-community. In addition to the support she received from her teacher and peers at school with respect to the conventions of writing, Lola acknowledged that her older sister was an important resource for writing the content of her immigration story, referring to the at-home funds of knowledge (L. C. Moll & Gonzalez, 1997) she relied upon in order to successfully complete this school assignment.

In the next excerpt, she comments on the writing task itself.

PR: …So, when you write now, do you think you can organize your ideas

better t han you could last year?

Lola: Well, a little bit. But now [in English class] we're [writing about] a

fantasy vacation.

PR: That sounds cool!

Lola: Yeah. I'm going to Mexico Puebla, where my grandparents and cousins and family are. But [my teacher] said that we have to have a hotel…and all that stuff, but I thought I was gonna spend the week with my uncle, and…I don't know…like, there are no hotels in Puebla where I live…just the people who always lived there….And so I was gonna take my two friends…because they're from Puebla too….but I'm getting all confused [because] now I am spending too much of the money that [the teacher] gave us [in the assignment instructions]…

PR: Maybe if you explain your ideas to your teacher…maybe you can work something out with her?

Lola: Yeah, I don't know…

…Lola: …I hear…on TV saying that the border – they put…a wire, or something like that so people won't cross…and they cross over and people get killed too much.

PR: Yeah. How does that make you feel?

Lola: Oh, that makes me feel angry cause you know…I think Mexico used to be a part of the United States and just the president sold it. And that could've been a better place. 'Cause you know that Mexicans, Mexico produces beans, potatoes, corn, and America produces other things such as clothes and gas, cars, and other things…it could be like a nation together and work together, so we could have a better life and no discrimination.

PR: You have some good ideas. Maybe you can write those down!

Lola: Yeah, but now we are writing about the fantasy vacation….And I don't really like that project because we are having [the administration] in there to do presentations.

PR: Oh, you're doing a presentation too?

Lola: Uh-huh, in front of [school administrators].

PR: Wow! What is that like for you?

Lola: Uh, for me it's, like, kind of…weird….I kind of feel nervous, like, I am shaking in my toes.

(M. Greene, personal communication, March 17, 2010)

I happened to pass Lola's English teacher (and my colleague) in the hallway immediately after my interview with Lola. The teacher was not aware that I was conducting interviews with students in the building that day, but the brief exchange we shared helps to contextualize Lola's remarks, so I'll share it here. In the process of our friendly 'hellos', I mentioned that I had heard about the 'fantasy vacation' assignment she was doing with her classes. The English teacher was visibly excited and eager to share about the project -- how she had come up with the fun idea to write a proposal to go on a fantasy vacation, and how she gave the students budgeting guidelines to incorporate cross-disciplinary skills of writing and mathematics. Then, to make the assignment more

relevant to students' lives, she invited school administrators to be an authentic audience for students as they gave presentations of their proposals.

I am confident that this teacher thoughtfully planned this assignment with intentions to engage and include as many of her students as possible. I am equally confident that Lola gained meaningful learning experiences by participating in this teacher's classroom. Despite these factors, there appeared to be a significant gap in understanding between the teacher and Lola with respect to this particular writing assignment's goals and objectives. Lola's fantasy vacation was rooted in the reality of her past. Importantly, her identity as an undocumented immigrant to the United States meant that the ability to visit with her family in Puebla was not an immediate or long-term reality. Thus, visiting with her family on the other side of a contested border fit the assignment's requirement to propose a fantasy vacation. The guidelines to include hotel accommodations within a prescribed budget seemed inappropriate to Lola, given the circumstances of her chosen vacation spot. Additionally, the upcoming presentation of her fictional proposal in front of school administrators seemed to provide Lola with more anxiety than the intended relevance or authenticity.

Most striking for me were the differences in the way Lola thought of herself as a writer. She articulated the supportive, collaborative writing environment she experienced during the immigration unit, noting the way her prior knowledge and home environment were used as legitimate and valuable assets to that work. In contrast, Lola seemed to find the guidelines of the fantasy vacation assignment restrictive to her thinking and writing process; unintentionally, her social reality was not acknowledged within that particular classroom environment.

Recognizing that writing, and especially writing in a non-native language, can be a challenging task, Edwin shared his thoughts on producing comprehensible writing:

> Thinking about the story is really not difficult because it's stamped in your mind…but to put my memories on paper? Yeah, that's difficult because sometimes you don't know how to put things in words. I mean, only *you* know what you're talking about, but when you come and write about it, it's like, you know don't know how to say it and how to put it….

Of note, Edwin stated his privileged position as a holder of knowledge; the content of his writing is "stamped in [his] mind" and "only [he]" knows what that content needs to be. The main struggles for him were related to vocabulary, writing style, and conventions – the more technical aspects of writing that allow for an experience to be relived through written word. Edwin revised his work each time he received feedback on its content, wanting to ensure that what he wrote relayed precisely what he was trying to convey.

Lola identified writing challenges of an affective nature. She shared one of her strategies for coping with the difficulties of writing an important piece of text.

> ...when I started to feel like [writing my story] was difficult, I remembered my grandparents in Mexico and…it gave me a strong feeling…it was like it gave me the ability to…not give up and do better.

As is the case for most writers, one can slide in and out of productive writing strides. It can be easy to wallow in feelings of self-doubt and experience writing paralysis. Both Edwin and Lola enacted their memory as a resource for rescuing themselves from the potential of a downward, unproductive spiral.

Development of Emotional Maturity

The written personal narratives served as focal pieces for students in the development of their emotional maturity. In particular, students conveyed qualities of compassion and sympathetic connection in response to peers' writing, as well as feelings of legitimization of self.

One issue of tension that surfaced early in the inquiry was the relationship between citizenship and identity. As some of the students in the class were first generation, undocumented immigrants to the U.S. and others were first or second generation U.S. citizens, the latter group of students tended to distance themselves from identifying with those peers who did not have legal documentation. Students knew that racial and ethnic identities were conflated with citizenship and made active attempts to align themselves in ways that would allow for inclusion within the dominant culture.

One example of this can be illustrated through the evolution of Linda and Edwin's peer relationship. Linda proudly identified as a U.S. citizen and was quick to distance herself from the immigrant label. It was commonplace to witness her rolling her eyes in annoyance at any mention of immigrants, recognizing that the word encompassed attributes and indicators that she did not personally claim. Edwin, on the other hand, proudly claimed the immigrant identity, even as an immigrant 'without papers'. He was matter-of-fact and unapologetic in his identity claims, which may have made him seem oblivious of the political implications those claims carried with them.

As classmates, Linda and Edwin voiced their identity claims in group discussions, much to the discomfort of some of their peers. As their teacher, I noticed a softening of

this tension over the course of the inquiry unit. It seemed that through the sharing of their personal narratives, connections were made and tension began to dissipate. As Linda spoke with her high school peers, one year after the immigration inquiry unit, she reflected on Edwin's writing.

> Linda: I really like Edwin's story – [it] really touched me, how much he had to go through….When I [first met] him, I thought he was just a hyper boy because he's always playing around a lot, but then [I read] his story…how he had to leave his grandmother and was really sad, but he couldn't cry. It makes me feel so sad for him. I thought he was really brave….and I didn't think of him as a hyper boy [anymore] but, like another person.

In the above reflection, Linda acknowledges her own assumptions about Edwin before reading his narrative – how she initially dismissed him, but grew to understand him as "another person," engendering a sense of compassion and humanity towards him. Later, in her reflective conversations with high school peers, Linda extended her thinking, demonstrating how her experience with Edwin's story impacted her perspective of first generation immigrants:

> It felt great to hear how [other students in my class] came here because a lot of people don't know how [immigrants] come here; they just think that they came here without any problems, but…some of them had to leave their family behind, and friends, and stuff they really love…

Amongst first generation immigrants, students discovered a sense of affinity through resonating experiences. Ana found significance in Lola's writing:

> I feel great that [Lola] wrote her story because a lot of us don't share our story, but we need to…some people think we just come to the United States to take jobs away. Some people think it's easy to cross the border,

but it's not – we leave things behind that we want to take with us. It was great of her to share her feelings - how she had to leave her grandparents….A lot of us…move every year and have to leave people we love and [then] we can't see them anymore.

Likewise, reading the personal narratives and listening to personal accounts of immigrants throughout the history of the United States provided first and second generation immigrant students with relevant text that built upon their background knowledge. For example, Edwin reflected on the connections he was able to make after listening to one of our guest speakers, who is a university dean.

I remember Dr. Sanchez…I was surprised how he came to the United States. He told us that he left behind a lot of things and people he loved and how he came here by boat. I didn't come here by boat, but I had to leave lots of people I love, too. Yeah, [Dr. Sanchez] was fun to talk with…it made me think how much he struggled to be here…and now he is in charge in the university! And so, yeah, that makes me feel proud and full of hope.

Each story had in it a thread which resonated with someone; something that pulled him/her in, inviting them to listen, to care, to better understand one another. The stories were the connective tissues that bound students together in community.

Writing personal narratives in a third-space-imagined-community allowed for students to experience pride in themselves. In our interview together, Lola articulated how the writing of her personal narrative invoked a therapeutic sense of legitimization for her.

I think that writing our immigration stories was a really good idea because people can learned from our stories a lot and they can get that idea of writing their immigration story too. I'm so proud of myself because

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I got to write my story and got all my feelings out. (M. Greene, personal communication, April 23, 2009)

Here, Lola reflected on the meaning of her narrative being read by others, hinting at the significance of the written word as seen and heard and, therefore, legitimate. She acknowledged her sense of pride for writing her story but also expressed the cathartic value of getting all her feelings out into written words on paper. The personal narrative facilitated a sense of self-validation in her identity development and self-esteem, allowing her to feel heard, understood, cared for.

In private messages to me, a few other students expressed similar sentiments after the book's publication:

…All of us had to work hard on [writing our stories] and it reminded us of the past and [to] try to work for our future.

…I want to dedicate my story to you for giving us an opportunity to write the book and let people read our stories.

Development as an Agent of Change

When I shared the invitation to present his work at the high school, Edwin lit up with characteristic enthusiasm. He relayed that many people in the school community had mentioned the book to him since its publication.

Miss, [the book] is famous! It's even in [the elementary school]! ….My mom and I took my little sister to her school and this lady came up and asked, "Aren't you in Mrs. Greene's class and you wrote [a story] in the book? It's awesome – I love it!"…And every teacher in the summer

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school classroom was like, "Oh, can you sign our [copy of the] book?"…So, yeah, we gave autographs. It was pretty fun.

Edwin's experience with the book's local fame, in part, stimulated his interest to continue learning about current events related to the DREAM Act. He went on to tell me that he was in the process of composing a letter to President Obama. Later, he sent a draft of his letter to me, requesting that I help him edit the spelling and grammar so that it would "be perfect." The letter was a candid, urgent plea for help to allow undocumented students find a pathway to legal citizenship. An excerpt follows:

> I love going to school in the United States and I am learning lots of things. I will be in high school soon and, after that, I want to go to college, but I am not so sure how I will get to go to college right now. My mom is working hard at two jobs so that she can take care of my sister and me, but she cannot make enough monies. …Someday, I want to become an archeologist. I am hoping that you will have compassion for immigrant students like me.

Edwin's letter offered anecdotal evidence for one of the major complexities facing undocumented immigrants and the United States. Regardless of citizenship status, U.S. federal law states that enrollment in school is compulsory for all children residing in the United States who are under the age of 16 (and school enrollment is permitted through age 21). After high school, it is generally expected that graduates take one of three paths: find employment, attend an institution of higher learning, or join the military. Students without citizenship documentation, however, cannot legally gain employment or join the military without a social security number; and, while anyone – documented or not - can attend a public or private institution of higher education, one must be able to

pay the tuition. Many students in the United States rely on federal student loans in order

to afford the high and rising cost of a college education, but a social security number is

also required to qualify for loans. Thus, undocumented students who have immigrated to

the United States as children of economic refugees have few options for sustaining their

lives legally after high school.

Edwin's recognition and deep understanding of the gravity his immigration

circumstances were further evidenced in his suggestion for the book's dedication page.

He wrote: "This book is dedicated to all the immigrants who dream on for a better

future." His intentions for writing his own story extended to his classmates' stories too;

Edwin believed in the possibility that their stories could offer a sense of solidarity for

other immigrants. In this way, Edwin interpreted the written narratives as resources for

regenerating or renewing feelings of hope for those struggling to cope within a

marginalizing system.

Another instance of regeneration surfaced in Lola's interview.

> [Having my immigration story published in a book] makes me feel
> fine…not only [is] my story gonna be read and remembered, but other
> people, like my friends, they got the chance to express their feelings… (M.
> Greene, personal communication, March 17, 2010).

Of her own experience as a border woman, Anzaldua (1987) articulates the inner and

outer conflicts of existing in between two different worlds (in both her and Lola's case,

the Texas-Mexico border), shifting between ways of knowing and ways of being known.

But she also identifies "an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of

humankind, in being "worked" on…being activated, awakened" (p. 19). The social

positioning of dominant discourses over marginalized discourses often alludes to linear

trajectories of power that assume power can only move from one space to another, rather

than granting pervasive power shifts that individuals can negotiate throughout and

between spaces. Intimate accounts like Lola and Anzaldua's offer healing resonance for

others who experience life on the margins, but they also present opportunities for

individual agency in how the 'self' is defined. With respect to migrant or transnational

beings, the concept of a third-space-imagined-community introduces the creation of new

cultural interstices from which identities can emerge. Thus, those previously defined as

marginalized shift the center to the margins, re-envisioning and redefining identity

claims.

During the high school visit, one of the high school students posed the question to

the student authors: "Aren't you afraid that somebody's going to read your story and

maybe you will be deported?" The high-schooler expressed hesitancy about sharing the

details of her own story for fear that it would put her and her family at risk for

deportation. Edwin was quick and confident in his response.

> I know my story is out there…it's an example of what we have to go
> through to be where we are right now. I know that somebody out there,
> somebody's going to read our stories and get a picture of what it's like
> coming from another country into a different country when you don't have
> any idea of how people [will] interact with you, the language, the
> traditions, you know, you have to get used to all of that. So…the
> stories…[they're] like an example. [The stories] say, "Go on! Don't give
> up!"

This exchange surprised and impressed me. The middle school students and I had

had numerous conversations during the inquiry unit about the threat of deportation. I

expected Linda and/or Edwin's response to the high school student to be more nuanced,

to reflect more of the struggle I thought I had witnessed in students as we were deciding how to share their stories outside of our classroom walls. In retrospect, I may have projected my own apprehensions onto them. Here, they demonstrated the ways that reading other people's stories offered a restorative sense of compassion and connection with immigrants across history, including their fellow classmates. Furthermore, they gleaned a renewed sense of self-confidence through writing their stories for others to gain access to compassion and connection.

Regeneration

From these reflective interviews, email communications, and discussions with high school students, I gained further understanding of the inquiry unit's impact on students' learning. Here, the concept of a third-space-imagined-community offers a way to recognize students' understanding and development of their individual identities. As their teacher, it was enlightening for me to see how the students' work extended beyond history lessons or writing assignments; they were transforming the way they saw themselves as autonomous beings, shifting the center of agency into their own hands, points I later learned through these informal communications and formal interviews with students.   They expressed better understanding of themselves through the process of writing their storied lives, what Riessman (2008) refers to as "social artifacts."

Relatedly, Guerra (2008) offers the notion of transcultural repositioning, "the idea that members of historically excluded groups are in a position to cultivate adaptive strategies that help them move across cultural boundaries by negotiating new and different contexts and communicative conventions." Lola's description for coping with the challenges she faced while writing her immigration story in a second language

included recalling memories of her grandparents in Mexico. Likewise, Edwin shared how reading other people's stories of immigration resonated with him in ways that helped him feel connected with other immigrants throughout history, other immigrants in his immediate, local community, and even prompted him to believe that he and his classmates' stories would help future immigrants have hope for their own futures.

As I had expected, students' reflections suggested that this curricular unit, led by their interests, allowed for greater relevance and authenticity than previous units which were led primarily by preconceived, teacher-led, curricular topics. Beyond this, however, these adolescent immigrant students demonstrated greater capacity for self-expression and self-advocacy, tapping into fundamental aspects of identity development and helping them to identify and articulate *authenticity of self.* While it may be tempting to attach essentializing notions to the concept of the 'authentic self', I suggest borrowing from Marcia's (1980, p. 109) proposed idea of identity as "an internal self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" to consider that self-authenticity can exist in a state of exploration. Further, Alsaker and Kroger (2006) differentiate between definitions of self-concept and identity, noting that self-concept describes characteristics about the self (i.e., Who am I?), whereas identity describes one's contextualized social role (i.e., What is my role is society? Or Who am I *in relation to others*?). This, too, is helpful in understanding the layered complexities of authentic identity development that emerged throughout and following the study. In the process of writing about and reflecting upon their immigration stories, students were developing dual aspects of their authentic selves – individual self-concepts, as well as their roles within the collective of immigrant identities across space and time.

It was helpful for me, then, to realize the three constructs that emerged from students' reflections – *development as a writer, development of emotional maturity, and development as an agent of change* - as contributing to a larger theme: *regeneration of authentic self.* The Random House dictionary defines the word *regenerate* in a number of ways, but three definitions of the verb have particular resonance with the students' story content and self-descriptions of their experiences of writing personal narratives of immigration: 1) to re-create, reconstitute, or make over, especially in a better form or condition; 2) to revive or produce anew; to bring into existence again; and 3) to renew or restore a lost, removed, or injured part. All three of these definitions of regeneration help to illuminate the understanding and development that students' cultivated through third-space-imagined-community.

By themselves, the reflections displayed generative learning, but thinking of the acts as **re**generative assumes students' privileged positions as beings who already have claims about their identities and are in the process of recreating, renewing, and restoring those claims. A realist theory of identity development helps to explicate that, while cultural identities are neither predetermined nor permanent, they *are* socially constructed, and therefore, limited to the sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which they exist. However, realist theory also affords agentic qualities, as it privileges the voices and experiences of people of color. In the words of Moya (2002) "a realist theory of identity gives women of color a way to substantiate that we *do* possess knowledge – knowledge important not only for ourselves but also for all who wish to more accurately understand the world – and that we possess it partly as a result of the fact that we *are* women of

color" (p. 57). Moya's conception of identity claims can be expanded, here, to include people of color, as in the case of the immigrant students with whom I worked.

In the aforementioned examples of *development as a writer*, the students revealed ways that our third-space-imagined-community provided the potential for creating and recreating positive conceptions of themselves as writers. Students referenced their own *resourcefulness*, as they enlisted in teachers, peers, and family members to be instruments in their writing. One student drew from her own lived experience to *redefine* interpretations of a class assignment, thereby exposing an embedded cultural bias in the assignment's instructions. Students further relied on the act of *remembering* as an affective tool for coping with the challenges of writing.

Examples of *development of emotional maturity* reveal students' reflections on the *renewed* sense of compassion they experienced within their classroom community of immigrant peers. Through writing and reading each other's written narratives, students made connections which revealed their abilities to sympathize with others' lived experiences. Similarly, after speaking with a university dean who is a first-generation immigrant, Edwin expressed a *restored* sense of pride and hope for the future of immigrants. Lola experienced a *renewed* image of herself, recognizing the legitimizing and cathartic value of writing down her lived experiences for others to read and know.

Finally, through examples of *development as an agent of change*, students demonstrated *reconstituted* notions of self, in which they thought of themselves as capable and important contributors to society, worthy of being heard. Edwin began applying the knowledge he had gained through our study of immigration to work towards

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reimagining the U.S. legal system as it relates to immigration reform. He also interpreted the narratives as *resources* of hope and encouragement to other immigrants. Lola touted the opportunity she and her friends had in writing and publishing their immigration stories, as it offered a chance to "be read and *remembered*."

The interactions I had with students in the year following our year-long inquiry allowed for reflection about individual growth. Third-space-imagined-community, when applied to students' reflections of their work, revealed the development of individual self with respect to agentic notions of self-esteem and empowerment. Students built upon their experiences to regenerate their understanding and development into acts of change.

Chapter 6: Third-Space-Imagined-Community

There were three research questions I was interested in exploring at the start of and throughout this study. To reiterate, the main question regarding students and curriculum was:

In what ways does inquiry-based, student-led learning contribute to positive identity development for English language learners?

The two questions related to practitioner researcher methods and teacher identity development, respectively, will be discussed later in this chapter:

What challenges emerge while attempting to fulfill the dual roles of practitioner and researcher in the same time and space?

What can I learn about myself and my practice through a practitioner-researcher approach?

I attempted to address these questions separately through data analysis however, just as it is difficult to separate out parts of the self, a classroom community is a whole organism and, thus, it was impossible for me to separate out aspects of the class' works and activities to address these questions as independent entities. Each of the preceding three chapters includes data and analysis that aim to satisfy the essence of the research questions. For the sake of organizing a linear product in this body of writing, the preceding three chapters outline 1) the class' collective sense-making throughout the academic year; 2) the students' individual personal written narratives, which, one could argue, were also collectively produced; and 3) reflective conversations about the student-led, inquiry-based learning process. Here, I hope to expand upon those previous

segments of analyses to offer a holistic framework for considering curriculum development and implementation with immigrant adolescents.

The framework offers concrete connections between theory and practice with respect to teaching and learning environments which include immigrant youth, though the concepts could easily be applied within other marginalized communities. Four main cyclical, intertwining and inter-temporal elements of theory and practice contribute to the third-space-imagined-community framework.

Third-Space-Imagined-Community
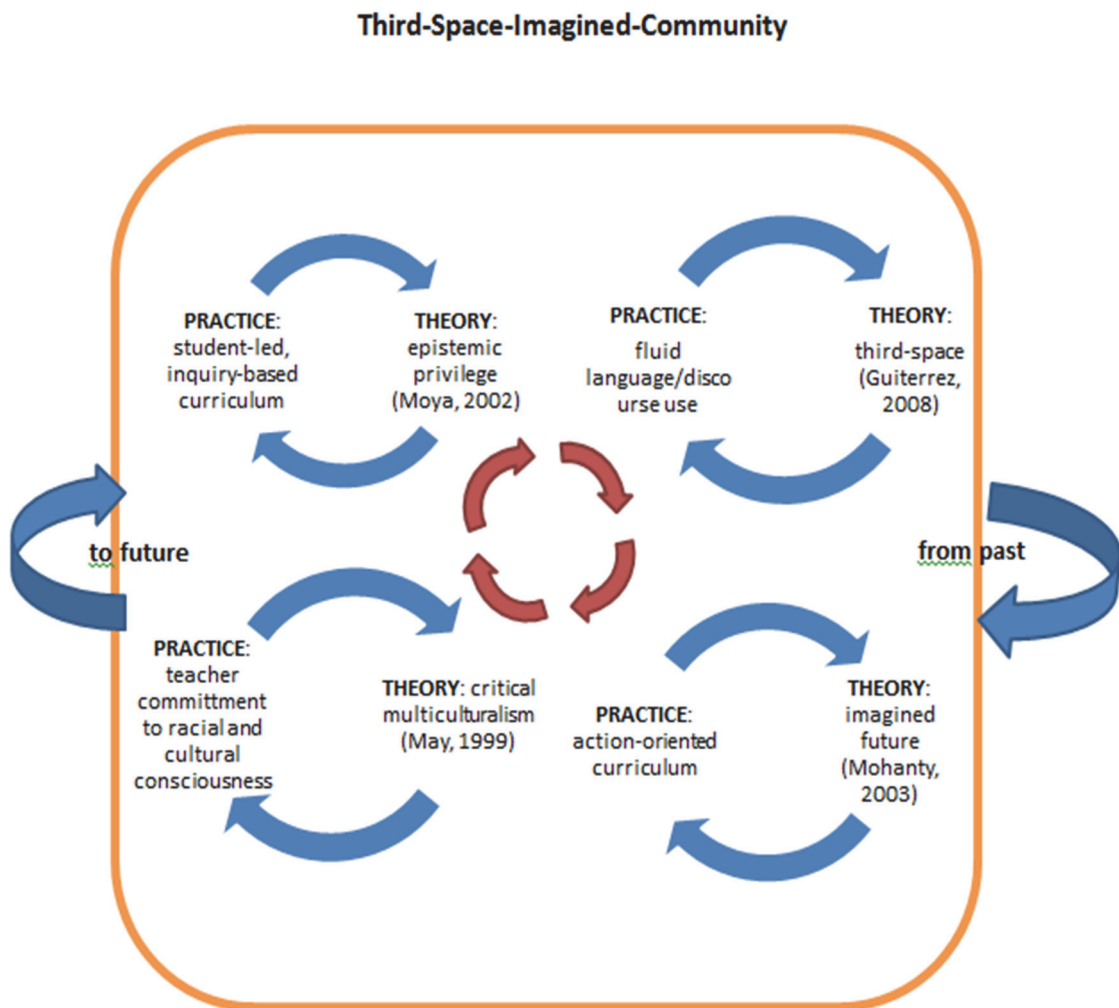
1) **THEORY**: Epistemic privilege (Moya, 2002) is assumed. Historically and/or currently marginalized students are privileged as knowledge holders and knowledge generators. An individual's prior experiences are the most logical and most legitimate places from which to generate new knowledge. Within the learning community, participants are expected to draw upon their experiences as legitimate and valid resources of knowledge.

PRACTICE: Students' interests and ideas guide the curriculum in an inquiry-based format. Knowledge is constructed reciprocally, collaboratively, and for the benefit of the collective. It is assumed that every member of the classroom community is an asset to the inquiry learning process because each person holds unique and valuable perspectives. To allow for productive knowledge generation, it is expected that every member of the classroom community share his/her perspectives, as well as encourage others to share their perspectives. Through this process, the knowledge that is generated benefits all the members of the participating community. The classroom teacher engages practitioner-research. S/he is transparent about the cyclical process of her/his own teaching, reflecting, questioning, researching, dialoging, and learning and acts as a facilitator more than a lecturer.

2) **THEORY**: Third space (Gutierrez et al., 1999) is implied. The potential for authentic discourse between students and teacher(s) is created when different language and language uses are allowed and expected in the classroom/school context. In the ESL classroom setting, this includes: native language(s) and English; formal/academic and informal/social language; official and unofficial words and phrases (i.e. invented

language use, such as, Spanglish); and traditional scripts of teaching and learning as well as counterscripts of traditional methods.

PRACTICE: Multiple forms of language and discourse are expected and accepted as legitimate forms of expression and communication. Opportunities for oral and written reflection on the learning process are embedded into the regular teaching-learning process.

3) **THEORY**: The concept of an imagined future (Mohanty, 2003) is employed, not because the future isn't real, but because the work of imagining connotes agentic possibilities for those who engage it.

PRACTICE: Action-oriented applications of learning are negotiated and implemented by the students with the teacher's guidance. The participants of the learning community build upon their learning to create an action plan that contributes to a collective, imagined future.

4) **THEORY**: An understanding of Critical Multiculturalism (May, 1999) is actively pursued.   Developing an ability to recognize hegemonic forces supports a person's ability to critique socially constructed notions of race, which are crucial to understanding systemic power dynamics.

PRACTICE: The teacher explicitly "recognize[s] and incorporate[s] the differing cultural knowledges that children bring with them to school, while at the same time address[es] and contest[s] the differential cultural capital attributed to them as a result of wider hegemonic power relations" (May, 1999, p. 32). The practitioner, especially one who holds a race/culture/ethnicity that is different from those of her students, continually

strives for greater cultural and racial consciousness for herself and her students as a way to critically examine and respond to their roles within a system of power.

Together, the aforementioned theory-to-practice cycles inform each other both independently and collectively, creating the potential for dynamic, authentic, and personally relevant learning as well as positive identity development for historically marginalized students and their teacher. Just as these cycles intertwine with one another in the same space, they also inform its members' sense-making across time and space. Participants of a third-space-imagined-community explicitly and continually draw from their pasts as resources for making sense of the present time and space; likewise, they use their growing knowledge to actively work towards imagining a future. Students become agents of self-identifying, in part, due to a developing critical awareness of their social location within a broader temporal context of history, politics, and race.

The contested spaces of the students' school and surrounding community environments in this study served as an impetus for creating a 'third space-imagined community' in which they could examine their own histories and identities. When students' ideas and interests were foregrounded as curricular topics, students began to shift their conceptions of themselves from compliant to autonomous beings, capable of influencing their current and future life trajectories. Because the inquiry was student initiated, the instructional unit of study was reflective of the students' own background cultural knowledge and experiences and, accordingly, the students found the personal narratives of immigration to be culturally significant and relevant to their own lived experiences. The process of writing personal narratives of immigration revealed therapeutic and legitimizing qualities. Thus, reading and writing personal narratives

using a critical lens served to facilitate students' academic development, as well as, their positive identity development.

The framework additionally highlights some of the ways a teacher, when engaging a practitioner-researcher stance based upon critical multiculturalism, is afforded opportunities to grow personally and professionally. The teacher models racial consciousness with as much transparency as possible; she shares her own questions and comments about systemic bias with the students as an integral aspect of developing critical engagement with school curriculum. The teacher pushes aside traditional notions of classroom instruction and adopts a leader-participant role, in which she takes an active interest in the students' wonderings, and in doing so, models ways to think critically and act consciously. This process of 'letting go' over the control of curricular topic and direction of the learning encourages the teacher's genuine engagement with students' interests and gives the teacher permission to be a learner amongst her students.

In this particular study, 'third-space-imagined-community' can be used to help elucidate how students developed critical understandings of their positionality within the temporal context of U.S. immigration history, their present and immediate community, and their imagined futures. The concept of a third-space-imagined-community lends itself to unpacking the multiple layers of understanding and development that occurred during and after the curricular study: increased awareness of sociopolitical tensions within local and national communities; greater understanding of structural biases within the immediate institutional surroundings; and greater understanding and development of self.

Implications for third-space-imagined-community in schools

There are three main implications that emerge from this study. The first relates to curriculum development; the second offers recommendations for the profession of teaching; and the third offers remarks about my personal identity development. I will discuss each of these in greater detail here.

Curriculum in a Third-Space-Imagined-Community

The findings in this study offer direct instructional implications for schools serving immigrant adolescents. The positive effects of culturally relevant instruction is well documented (Gay, 2000; Heath, 1982; T. C. Howard, 2001; Irizarry, 2007; Kelly, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Paris, 2012); when instruction is culturally relevant to students, it augments their access to academic development. Schools need to be spaces where the cultural backgrounds of their students are reflected in daily classroom instructional activities. Many schools and teachers have and are attempting to infuse their curricula with 'relevant materials', but often do so in ways that reify stereotypes of non-White students and/or assume students' one-way assimilation from non-dominant to dominant cultural ways of knowing and doing. To avoid essentializing culture or imposing a western lens on non-western cultures, the student voice is crucial to representation.

This assertion has significant implications for curriculum development, as critical perspectives and representation of people of color remain to be seen or represented as part of mainstream curriculum or curricular efforts. While some efforts have been made to include visual representations of different skin colors in school materials, it remains a challenge to find regular representations of historically marginalized peoples in

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mainstream curricular materials; those that do depict people of color often represent them in limited, repetitive and/or reifying ways, failing to expose readers to the wide array of attributes, personalities, contributions, and experiences that people of color can and do possess. Until those materials are readily available, perhaps the most logical way for students of color to "see themselves" represented in curriculum is for them to be the subjects and generators of the curriculum.

Diaz and Flores (2001) offer, "If the students' language and cultural experiences are not included in socioeducational contexts, then they will have great difficulty reaching their level of potential development" (p. 33). As was the case for the immigrant adolescent students in this study, the concept of a third-space-imagined-community can be helpful in facilitating growth of and in whole people, in their academic development, as well as their positive racial and cultural identity development. In this study, through the inquiry-based study of U.S. immigration, immigrant students were not only able to learn about the rich and troubled history of the United States from a critical standpoint, they were also given the opportunity to make deep, personal connections with individuals from the past and present whose stories, experience, and existence resonated with their own. As the students expressed, it is no small thing to feel representation, natural affinity, and unapologetic understanding, to have your personal story and existence acknowledged as, not only valid, but also valued and connected to others throughout time.

Profession of teaching – Teachers as scholars

In its simplest depiction, schools are comprised of educators and students who bring with them all their ways of knowing and being in the world. Research shows that, increasingly, teachers' and students' racial and cultural experiences do not overlap with one another (G. Howard, 1999; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and numerous calls have been made for teachers to find ways to better understand the backgrounds of their students. This one-sided suggestion efforts educators in a progressive direction, but is insufficient for teachers to truly respond to the plural *cultures* of students; critical perspectives are necessary to invite intercultural and dialogical exchanges. This critical reflection may be particularly significant for mainstream educators (those who most identify with the dominant, middle-class, culture of Whiteness) to deconstruct their own race and cultural practices as but one of many ways of knowing, in lieu of accepting cultural normalization as universal. Deep, critical reflection about hegemonic forces demands a considerable commitment of one's intellectual and emotional energies; it requires *time*.

While the methods for my practitioner research role in this study encompassed two simultaneous full-time positions – that of classroom teacher and full time graduate student – this arrangement is not sustainable over a long period of time nor would this arrangement be possible for all teachers when considering myriad other factors, not the least of which include family roles and responsibilities. While the dual roles of teacher and learner provided me with opportunities for significant personal and professional growth, it was challenging to sustain the physical, mental, and emotional energy to do it

well. In order for teachers' continuing education to thrive, the structure of a teacher's work day ought to be reflective of the kind and quality of work expected of an educational professional. Currently, sanctioned time for study, dialogic exchange, and research of instructional practices are all vital, missing elements from the teacher work day.

More specifically, there is a need to address the time and human resources allotted for serving English language learners. ESL Teachers largely work in isolation within the margins of a school. While I know of several ESL Teachers who negotiate ways around time, space, and planning constraints in similar ways that I did in my school setting, there ought to be universal expectations for collaboration between ESL and content area teachers; time for co-planning and co-teaching content area literacies in core subject areas is essential. Additionally, the rising number of English language learners in schools begs for more teachers to develop their understanding of second language acquisition, appropriate and effective strategies for instructing and assessing ELLs, and critical awareness of the insidious racial and cultural biases in hidden in school culture and curriculum. Here again, collaborative relationships between ESL and content area teachers could help to fill in those gaps where formal training and/or education is not taking place.

Likewise, the U.S. system of public education, as it is currently structured, offers few choices for professional growth in the way of upward mobility. While opportunities exist for continuing education (albeit, outside the teacher work day) through professional development courses, exercises, university partnerships, grant-funded programs, etc., there are generally two sanctioned pathways for applying that knowledge within the

employment structure of K-12 public schools in the United States: 1) earn an administrators' license and obtain an administrative position within a school/district or 2) leave the K-12 system. The binary created by these two options undermines the institution of Education; it assumes that teachers have little else to offer to the profession if they do not move into administration and, thus, robs K-12 schools of valuable, creative resources. It is necessary to conceptualize teachers' professional growth and advancement in creative ways that extend beyond moving into administration or moving out. Examples might include roles for instructional coaching, equity/anti-racist leadership, and/or practitioner researchers, all of whom would work alongside administrators and classroom teachers.

Personal implications

As excited as I was to experiment with inquiry-based, student-led learning, the process was much more challenging than I had anticipated. In the beginning of the unit, I had doubts about some of the decisions the students wanted to make, in part because I wanted to remain compliant with my school administration and my own comfort zone. As I came to trust the students' decision-making, I let go of some of my need to please my superiors and was able to focus more on the learning taking place; my desire to overly manage class activities waned as the students and I learned to trust the inquiry process. Even still, I doubted myself and my actions daily. I often felt overwhelmed by the uncertainty of next steps.

I recall feeling surprised by how much my comfort level as a teacher was rooted in traditional pedagogy. I had thought of myself as progressive until I realized how uncomfortable it made me not to know (and not to be the sole decision-maker for) what

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was coming next. My mantra became "Listen and let go"; in other words, my daily plan as a teacher was to listen to the students and, in doing so, let go of my tendencies towards strict structure. I remember thinking, "So this is what it means to "trust the process," as I began adjusting to the inherent vulnerability one must accept in order for this kind of pedagogical practice to work.

It rarely escaped me that my own positionality within the school context was one of marginalization – both because of my association with under-represented students, as well as my evolving, personal, racial and cultural identity claims. Because ESL curriculum lay outside the focus of what was considered important for standardized testing preparation, my teacher voice was largely evacuated from professional, building-level conversations surrounding curriculum and pedagogy. While I intuited that purposeful learning was taking place in the ESL classroom and context, it wasn't until I began the work of regular, weekly reflection that I more fully realized the generative potential of working within these curricular margins. Despite the absence of regular observations and constructive feedback from my superiors, meaningful work and generative learning was taking place. Ironically, it is work that may not have been able to happen had I been subjected to the standardized scrutiny that most of my colleagues faced. It was the process of and commitment to reflective writing, then, that helped me redefine my teacher role and regain a sense of legitimization within the profession.

I anticipated the Equity Team to be a source for generative personal and professional growth, especially related to issues of racial and cultural identity development. Although the work of Singleton and Linton (2006) centered every educator as having a racial identity worthy of inclusion and examination, its manifestation in my

local setting seemed to de-racialize participants who were outside of the Black/White binary, creating a colorblindness to the few Asian Americans (Lee, 2005) who took part in 'courageous conversations about race'. The disingenuous invitation led me to feel largely isolated from race-based conversations with other educators. As previously mentioned, I found some affinity in the similar experiences of another Asian American colleague. Moreover, it was my students' interests and willingness to engage in learning about race, culture, and hegemonic structures that encouraged me.

In fact, student-led, inquiry-based curricular experience transformed my thinking about the links between literacy and identity and prompted me to begin researching the story of my own family's immigrant roots in China. Witnessing the powerful transformation that my students had experienced, I was anxious to connect with my own family's storied lives. Serendipitously, I was awarded a scholarship to study in China during the summer of 2009. The trip served as a catalyst for learning more about my Chinese grandparents, who up until that point, had been reticent about sharing the details of their immigration stories. They helped prepare me for the trip and, in doing so, began sharing memories of their lives before coming to the United States.

While it was openly historicized in our family that my maternal great-grandfather was a well-known and well-respected Nationalist General under Chiang Kai-shek, and that her family was part of the Chinese elite, these conversations were seldom initiated by my grandmother. She immigrated to the United States when she was in her early twenties to attend Adelphi University in New York. For a woman of her generation, she received a high degree of formal education, in part as a result of her family's social status and wealth. Without contextualizing the time period's gravity of wartime or complexities

of civil politics, the stories I had heard prior to preparing for my trip to China seemed overly simplistic, romantic even.

In deeper conversations with my grandmother, I learned how the legacy of war left its indelible mark on her memories of her father and her heritage country. War, in any context, summons mixed emotions of triumph and loss, sanction and sacrifice. For my grandmother's family history, the legacy of war is no less complex. She was very fond of her father and shared memories of the ways he showed he cared his children by tucking them into bed. Because he was a well-respected general, it meant that her family was part of the social and political elite of China. Having a general as one's father during wartime, however, meant spending significant stretches of time apart.

She had plans to attend university in the United States, but always looked forward to returning home to China. Towards the end of summer 1948, as her homesickness grew, she traveled to from New York to San Francisco – the first leg of the trip back to China. At the same time, the Community Party overtook the Mainland, so her father sent a telegram informing her that a homecoming was unsafe and would not be possible. The longing in her voice is inimitable when she recalls the moment she realized she would never saw her father again. That fall, she enrolled at Berkley University.

My grandfather immigrated to the United States in August 1948 on a work visa, as a Mandarin Chinese-English translator for the British government. As his train from New York approached San Francisco, the radio announced that Hitler had surrendered. The war was over, which meant my grandfather was out of a job. He, too, enrolled at Berkley University that fall and it is there that he and my grandmother met at the

International House. They married, started a family, and my grandfather went on to earn a Ph.D. in Political Science in 1965.

Their stories, for me, are transcendental. They have offered me greater perspective of the ways that major world events – the end of a world war - and relatively trivial, everyday decisions – the convenience of enrolling at Berkley, the choice to go to the International House - have been determinants of my very existence. Armed with this newfound appreciation, I was excited to visit my heritage country.

My grandparents called and wrote to family members in Beijing to announce that I would be visiting and made arrangements for us to meet. The relatives' names were not ones I recognized and pictures of their faces were unfamiliar to me. I feared that our meeting would feel forced; I did not want these distant relatives to feel obliged to host me. I was pleasantly surprised, then, to greeted with such familiarity and affection. They received me with hugs and presented me with stacks of photo albums that chronicled my family's lives in the United States. Weddings, graduations, births and birthdays, summer vacations, first days of school – milestone and, yet relatively ordinary, moments were represented in Poloroids and duplicate prints and carefully archived over the past half a century by people I barely knew who lived half a world away. Though we experienced a language barrier, the photographs served as a profound connection between us – I belonged to them and it was the first time I could recall feeling like my Chinese identity rightly belonged to me. In some ways, the visit served as a reunion, though it was the first time we were meeting in person; it represented a *reconnection* with my Chinese family and a *reclaiming* and *redefining* of my Asian American identity.

Further, the visit to my heritage country made me feel more connected to my students. There were undeniable variances in our families' immigration stories - they differed most notably in economic and historical circumstance – and yet, they overlapped in significant, humanizing ways. We shared an understanding of a diasporic family and all that it implies. We, as children of immigrants and/or grandchildren of immigrants understand the experience of leaving or of being left behind. We inherit the legacy of wondering about relationships that never were, for experiences and lives that could have been. At the core, we understand how our entire life trajectories have been prompted by the judgements of our families to immigrate to the United States of America. This humanizing connection has helped me to find deeper empathy and compassion for my students and their families. I believe it has made me a better person and a better teacher.

Learning for *all* is enhanced when approached from a critical perspective. Teachers, too, need to experience self-transformation, to critically reflect on their practice and experiences, to examine their racialized roles in society, to learn about and from their students. If we accept that Education and schooling are moral acts of socialization with the power to radically disrupt dominant norms, the integrity of the profession rests upon teachers' engagement with critical reflection. The educator who engages the concept of a third-space-imagined-community, then, is a constructivist, a change agent, a scholar, an ethnographer, a continuous learner, a conscious racial being, and a critical, self-reflective practitioner.

Afterword

As I write these concluding remarks, several of the students in this study are graduating from or nearing graduation from high school. I have felt honored to attend many of their graduation ceremonies and/or open houses upon formal invitation.

As these students consider their immediate options as high school graduates, most of them still claim undocumented status. If they are daunted by the sobering realities that "undocumented" implies, they do not let it show. Perhaps it helps that, in the time since our class' inquiry into immigration, several significant steps have been taken under President Obama's leadership. News headlines such as, "Obama Administration Halts Deportations of Non-Criminal Immigrants" (Dwyer, 2011), "No Deportation for Young 'Illegals': Obama's End Run on Immigration Reform" (Sorensen, 2012), "President Obama Eyes Immigration Reform As A Top Priority For 2014" (Latino, 2013), and most recently, "Obama says he will overhaul immigration without Congress' help" (Parsons & Mascaro, 2014) have flooded my inbox and news feed. Students have continued to engage me in the topic of immigration reform through social media, sending me links to online articles they've seen, asking for details or explanations about immigration reform programs, and seeking resources for assistance in applying for legal or protected status. Likewise, the students continue to express pride in their book of stories, which was sent to President Obama in 2009, and may have played a role in encouraging the Obama Administration to invite immigrants to tell their stories of immigration on the White House website, which now reads, "Share your own story to help remind Washington that we need an immigration system that lives up to our heritage as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants" ("The White House," 2014).

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One of the students just graduated with honors, in the top 10% of his large graduating class. He has been awarded an academic scholarship through a local non-profit organization, which will afford him the opportunity to enroll as a part-time student at a local vocational school.

Another student has planned to extend her graduation date, as federal law allows students to attend public, K-12 institutions through the age of 21. She and her boyfriend have a one-year-old baby boy, which qualifies her for the alternative learning program within the school district and allows her to go to school part-time and work part-time.

Still another student learned that she and her family had finally received legal documentation to reside and work in the United States, nearly 20 years after their initial application. She currently holds a part-time job as a front-desk assistant in a doctor's office and uses her earnings to help pay for classes at a local, vocational college.

Personally, I've continued to reflect, study, and analyze my own racial role within this school setting (Morita-Mullany & Greene, 2015) and anticipate ongoing examinations will help inform the evolution of my personal and professional identity claims.

The fact that the completion of this dissertation overlaps with their commencements has offered some bittersweet closure to this study. At once, I feel proud of them and their resilience even as I remain troubled by the loud political rhetoric which continues to place new immigrants on the defensive and contributes to perpetuating systemic biases in our country. But when I sense those latter arguments starting to overwhelm my better sensibilities, when I start to feel "stuck" in this worthy, but

challenging work, I incite a strategy I learned from Lola and Edwin – remembering as a source for regeneration - and the stories of immigration I've learned from my grandparents and my students offer humbling perspective and reassuring purpose for continuing to work towards equity.

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EDUCATION

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Ph.D. Literacy, Culture, and Language Education, 2015
> Areas of Concentration: Critical Multiculturalism, Practitioner Research, Critical Literacy, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, ELL Education, Immigrant Identity Development
> Minor: International and Comparative Education

M.S. Language Education, 2002
> Areas of Concentration: English as a Second Language, Foreign Language Instruction
> Indiana Teacher Certifications: K-12 ESL and 5-12 French

B.A. Telecommunications, 1998
> Areas of Concentration: Writing, Broadcast Journalism
> Minor: French

WORK EXPERIENCE
Butler University, Indianapolis, IN
Lecturer and Title III Grant Manager; Student Teaching Supervisor, 2011-2013
- Supervised and mentored undergraduate student teachers in their ESL field placements (2013)
- Taught intensive workshop *PhotoVoice for Teachers* through College of Education's 2012 Summer Institute/TEACH Butler (2012)
- Taught ED600, *Creating Inclusive Schools for English Language Learners* and *ESL Methods for Content Area Teachers*; 9-hour load each semester through the College of Education (2011-2012)
- Managed USDOE Title III Grant, "Project Alianza" (2011-2012)

MSD Lawrence Township, Indianapolis, IN
ESL Teacher: Fall Creek Valley Middle School, Grades 6-8, 2003-2012
- Developed engaging, research-based, student-centered curriculum and overall course structure for English language learners (ELLs).
- Coached content area teachers on appropriate, Indiana standards-based adaptations to instruction and assessment for ELLs
- Collaborated with district and school administration to create positive and effective native language communications between ELL students' families and school.
- Partnered with Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) to develop and offer graduate-level courses for practicing teachers on effective instruction and assessment for ELLs
- Advocated for culturally responsive teaching as member of district-wide Cultural Competency Initiative and Equity Team.
- Conducted action research for culturally relevant pedagogy in conjunction with school-based CARE (Collaborative Action Research for Equity) Team
- Served on the School Improvement Committee to help implement the district's Systemic Approach to Continuous Improvement.
- Developed and taught standards-based curriculum for K-8 students who were migrant and/or homeless with limited formal education in an annual four-week summer school intervention program.

Indiana University, Bloomington , IN
Associate Instructor and Project Coordinator-EPiCC Program, 2008-2013
> Taught Undergraduate-level course in Content Area Literacies (Spring 2013)
> Taught Masters-level courses (towards ESL Certification and M.S. Literacy, Culture and Language Education) in face-to-face and online settings to prepare K-12 teachers to address the academic needs of second language learners (2008-2011)
> Awarded $139,510 as part of an "Improving Teacher Quality" grant through the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to create "ESL Professionals in Collaborative Communities" (EPiCC) Program (2010-2011)

Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis, IN
Instructor – L530: ESL for Educators, 2005-2008
> Developed syllabus, overall course structure and administered grades in hybrid online/classroom semester-long course for K-12 Indiana educators.
> Facilitated theoretical framework for learning about language acquisition and acculturation.
> Supported K-12 Indiana educators in developing appropriate cultural and instructional adaptations in their classrooms and schools.

HONORS & AWARDS

- **INTESOL Small Program Development-Applied Research Grant,** 2012; Awarded $250 to examine the experiences of public school educators who self-identify as Asian American; analysis of ethnographic interviews aims to contribute to a better understanding of how Asians are situated within the ESL field.
- **Improving Teacher Quality Grant,** 2010-2011; Awarded $139,510 as part of an "Improving Teacher Quality" grant through the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to create "ESL Professionals in Collaborative Communities" (EPiCC) Program.
- **Harste Alternative Literacies Fellowship,** 2009-2010; Awarded to a full-time graduate student in the Literacy, Culture, and Language Education department who is interested in expanding the current notions of literacy beyond what has been the mainstream focus of literacy education.
- **Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program,** 2009; Awarded to United States Educators, this program is an intensive study seminar that focuses on native and foreign language instruction and training in the People's Republic of China.
- **Armstrong Teacher Educator Award,** 2008-2009; Awarded to outstanding K-12 teachers in the state of Indiana, this professional development opportunity honors educator excellence with funding for continued education and enables teachers to work with the faculty and undergraduates in the Teacher Education Program at Indiana University Bloomington's School of Education.
- **Excellence in Education Award Nominee,** 2008; Selected by teaching staff of Fall Creek Valley Middle School, this annual award recognizes one educator who demonstrates commitment to student achievement and overall excellence in education.
- **Honored Educator Award,** 2006-2009; Nominated by students of Fall Creek Valley Middle School, this annual award is given to a select group of educators who support student success and demonstrate outstanding teaching.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- **Board of Directors**, Pro(ACT) Community Partnerships, Inc., Indianapolis, IN, present; promote non-profit organization's mission: to engage youth in public service that educates, delights, and inspires the youth and those they serve
- **Volunteer**, SHARE, Indianapolis, IN, present; organize and participate in recreation and service learning events with secondary school youth in Lawrence Township during school breaks
- **International Outreach Committee** and **Worship Leader**, First United Methodist Church, Bloomington, IN, 2000-2007; served as committee member to plan for international outreach efforts; collaborated with Associate Pastor and Director of Youth Ministries to create a blended contemporary worship service, planned music to support weekly services, led weekly music rehearsals and services

- **Volunteer**, Sister Cities International, Bloomington, IN-Posoltega, Nicaragua, 1999-2000; worked to foster international understanding through post-disaster relief efforts and early literacy initiatives

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- 2015, AERA, Chicago, IL; findings on practitioner research inquiry of adolescent immigrant students and their teacher in a third-space-imagined-community
- 2015, Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference, Las Vegas, NV; findings on adolescent immigrant students generating their own literacy curriculum
- 2014, INTESOL, Indianapolis, IN; findings from ESL students' written narratives of immigration
- 2014, Building Tomorrow, Nashville, IN; overview of the global education crisis
- 2014, American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA; final findings from ethnographic interviews with Asian American educators.
- 2013, INTESOL, Indianapolis, IN; ongoing findings from ethnographic interviews with Asian American educators.
- 2013, University of Pennsylvania Ethnography Conference, Philadelphia, PA; findings from PhotoVoice research with immigrant adolescents; preliminary findings from ethnographic interviews with Asian American public educators
- 2012, INTESOL, Indianapolis, IN; PhotoVoice research with practicing teachers
- 2012, National Association for Bilingual Education Conference, Dallas, TX; preliminary findings from PhotoVoice research with immigrant adolescents
- 2010, Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning Conference, Indianapolis, IN; ESL models and their respective outcomes in Central Indiana
- 2008, Indiana Middle Level Education Association State Conference, Indianapolis, IN; report on district-level initiative on Cultural Competency and school progress on Culturally Responsive Teaching
- 2003-2008, Indiana Department of Education K-12 ESL Conference, Indianapolis, IN; annual report on current information pertaining to effective, standards-based practices for K-12 educators of English Language Learners

PUBLICATIONS

- Morita-Mullaney, T. and M.C.S. Greene. (2015). Narratives of Asian American female educators: Resistance, retention and rhetoric. Modern Societal Impacts of the Model Minority Stereotype. N.D. Hartlep. Hershey, PA, IGI Global.
- Adams, S. R., Brooks, K., & Greene, M. (2014). Using PhotoVoice to empower K-12 teachers and students through authentic literacy engagements. *Writing and Pedagogy, 6.3*, 649-664. Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing. doi:10.1558/wap.v6i3.649
- Greene, M.C.S. (2012). The power of personal narrative: Latina adolescents in a third-space-imagined community. *INTESOL Journal*. 9(1), 7-15.
- Greene, M.C.S. (Ed.). (2009). *Different Worlds: Stories of immigrant youth by immigrant youth.* Indianapolis: Lulu Publishing.
- Greene, M.C.S. (In process). IMAGinE: Images as mediational tools for positive bicultural identity development.
- Greene, M.C.S. (In process). Writing as a Regenerative Act: Personal narratives of adolescent ELLs.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Indiana Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language (INTESOL)
- National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
- The National School Reform Faculty/Critical Friends Group Coach