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Sowing the Seeds of Love: Dialogic and Collaborative Literacies For Social Change

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SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE:
DIALOGIC AND COLLABORATIVE LITERACIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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They tried to bury us; they didn't know we were seeds.
-Mexican proverb

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Dissertation abstract

Sowing the seeds of love:
Dialogic and collaborative literacies for social change

This ethnographic case study explored the impact of community organizing on the literacy practices of elementary and middle school aged children and youth in a Bay Area intergenerational non-profit centered on education justice and equity. The participants in the study were part of a program that addressed the needs of children and youth aged four to fourteen. This study foregrounded collaborative critical literacy practices that promoted engagement with topics relevant to their lives.

This study is informed by a belief in critical literacy and community organizing as tools to change the world. The children and the youth drew on a wide array of literacy practices and genres in their community organizing work such as researching pertinent topics then analyzing and synthesizing this material in order to teach a larger public in a workshop setting. Data was collected over a six-month period across various settings including weekly meetings, leadership days, and other events that arose (i.e., conference presentations and speaking at City Hall).

The findings from the study showed that the CCAT children and youth developed and sustained transformative political discourse and activism through their literacy practices. Key findings were 1) community organizing with youth supported critical literacy and creative expression; 2) community organizing with youth supported critical literacy and facilitation skills; 3) community organizing fostered peer-to-peer teaching and learning; and 4) community organizing fostered collective leadership and civic engagement among the youth.

This study makes the argument that for transformative social action to happen community organizing principles need to be harnessed to critical literacy skills. Within the community organizing space there is equality and equity of voice and participation. Leadership is built among community members in a non-hierarchical fashion and the younger children saw themselves as leaders within the collective. Through their work with CCAT the children and youth enacted tenets of citizenship as they wrote themselves into their civic lives. They are practicing for a future where their already powerful voices will be amplified.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

> In conversation with Bonnie, the program coordinator of Children Creating and Transforming (CCAT), I mentioned the Mexican proverb: "They tried to bury us," and Bonnie responded, "but they didn't know we were seeds." She added, "So now that's like the evolution of that metaphor. This year it's about getting the kids to see that we're planting seeds to grow and transform personally in our leadership, but also to fight and resist the systems that tell us that we're only planted to be buried in silence. But now getting to see, flip that narrative, we're planted to grow and to speak up and to be seen and to be sprouted, and to actually use our transformation individually for collective good."
>
> (Interview with Bonnie, October 23rd, 2019)

Introduction

This study explored how community organizing impacted the critical literacy practices of a group of children and youth who are part of a larger organization centered on education justice and equity. This space offered opportunities for the children and youth to question their world and suggest change to address inequities and injustice. Composing and interacting with texts that highlight tensions existing in daily life was at the heart of this study, as children and youth worked collaboratively to problem-solve their futures. Dialogic and collaborative literacies supported students' varied skills and talents as they worked together, using the skills of each to compose texts and express their worlds.

Writing is at the heart of the social justice classroom (Christensen, 2009), as it breathes life into experiences and emotion that may otherwise go unrecognized. Through writing and composition of text, we learn more about ourselves and our place in the world. Paulo Freire (1970) states that our "ontological vocation," the work we do as people, is that of becoming more "fully human." Writing and related literacies help us better understand who we are and help us understand this ontological vocation (Freire, 1970, p. 75). Writing (and other forms of literacy) is an active, personal, theory-building, theory-testing process that facilitates the making of meaning (Samway, 2006). We write in order to express ourselves, make connections with others, and better understand the worlds we live in, both real and imagined (Meier, 2004).

Schooling in English-dominant Western countries often promotes the development of the individual at the expense of the collective. Progress premised on mandated curriculum and performance on standardized tests does not involve collective input or collaboration. For the well-being and healthy development of all students, educators must take on explicit antiracist (Germán, 2019; Kendi, 2019) and anti-bias teachings (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Anti-bias work is essentially "optimistic work about the future of our children" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 2), and antiracist teaching challenges the dominant worldview that maintains the status quo (Germán, 2019; Kendi, 2019). As Angela Davis says, "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist; we must be antiracist." (Germán, 2019, p.1). In the language arts classroom, this involves texts that challenge students to talk about racism and other systems of oppression. If these conversations are not happening, then racist patterns are being reproduced.

Students draw from collective experiences outside of school, including working together as a family and as a community to problem-solve how best to address injustice and inequity in their personalized contexts. This also involves creativity and imagination, to envision a world different from the one we live in now. Germán (2019) states that progress and liberation won't happen in isolation, and that the movement towards racial justice and equity will only happen in community. This qualitative study explores the ways in which children and youth in an out-of-school-hours community organizing program enact critical literacy practices as part of their political and personal growth.

Statement of the Problem

The current focus on globalization(s) and literacy has led to an expansion of what counts as literacy, text, and learning among researchers—particularly with respect to the rapid expansion of media and technologies in recent decades—but when it comes to mainstream understanding and practice (Mein, 2009), the opposite is true. Policy making and dominant societal discourses emphasize narrow conceptions of literacy that have become more and more standardized (Mein, 2009; Souto-Manning & Yoon, 2018). Literacy is thus linked to economic ends, and knowledge is seen as a commodity to be bought and sold via curriculum packages tied to for-profit organizations (Mein, 2009).

Through dialogue and collaboration, we learn to "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In the context of this study, children and youth worked together to read and analyze the word, leading to a greater understanding of the issues of educational injustice around them; from there, they acted upon and challenged inequitable relations of power structures in their world. Dialogue, according to Freire (1970), is an act of love; no

true learning occurs without love for self and community. Working collaboratively enhances communal skills and expression.

As many educators (Christensen, 2009; Dyson, 2003; Flint & Laman, 2014; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016) have noted, writing and composition of text holds tremendous promise as a curricular space for children to share their lives, experiences, and knowledge. Yet this dimension of the school curriculum is regularly short-changed, especially by policy makers (Flint & Laman, 2014). As Flint and Laman (2014) note, "Although many teachers are knowledgeable about process-oriented approaches and best practices for writing pedagogy, these practices are generally replaced with more prescriptive formats that are aligned to standardized test formats" (p. 72). Consequently, K-12 teachers often remark that they do not feel confident teaching writing, and many school districts mandate writing programs in a way that does not allow for much freedom. As a result, students have become disengaged with writing and developed a dislike of writing as a valuable learning process.

Similarly, research studies on writing and writing practices are less common than those on reading (Samway, 2006). However, a body of qualitative studies in the early years of schooling has explored emergent literacy practices and sense-making through writing (Dyson, 2003; Flint & Laman, 2014; Ghiso, 2015; McKee & Heydon, 2015; Souto-Manning & Yoon, 2018). While research on collaborative writing has been carried out in vocational education (Ortoleva & Bétrancourt, 2015), in university English as a Foreign Language courses (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011; Storch, 2005), and secondary school classrooms (Corcelles & Castelló, 2015), these studies used quantitative methods with a goal of replication. Limited qualitative research on collaborative writing with older elementary

children and middle school youth has been conducted, and so this research attempts to address this gap.

Background and Need

The mere act of being able to read and write does not bring about emancipation or transformation (Street, 2006), despite "cyclical claims by politicians and others that lack of literacy is the cause of all that ails us" (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 5). Text is never neutral, and hegemonic ideologies take root in the absence of critical thought. Rose (1990) contends that the West is in the middle of an extraordinary social experiment: the attempt to provide education for members of a vast pluralistic democracy. Three decades after the publication of *Lives on the Boundary* (Rose, 1990), the rhetoric remains one of providing education for all, but it is patently clear that this is not truly the goal. Educational rhetoric aimed to placate those in power uses terms such as "social justice and equity," but the terms are equated with preparing students for high-stakes standardized testing and a back-to-basics curriculum (P. L. Thomas, 2015). In these cases, equity comes to mean the ability to employ dominant literacy practices to get ahead, rather than a structural critique of the forces holding children and communities back.

Politically charged deficit views of Communities of Color persist, and the popular narratives of "grit" (Duckworth, 2016) and "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2006) are used to select and sort. These narratives take as a starting point the child in the class and what they are able to achieve on their own in the classroom environment; the narratives do not take into account demonstrations of grit or growth mindset in life for the child outside of school. Bettina Love (2019) writes that "Measuring dark students' grit while removing no

institutional barriers is education's version of *The Hunger Games*" (Love, 2019, p. 73). Dark children, Love affirms, are tested against odds that they and their families did not create, knowing they cannot win. The frames of grit and growth mindset negate the importance of sociocultural learning and "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005). The "extraordinary social experiment" that Mike Rose (1990, p. 238) describes often falters on a systemic level, but there is always hope. We need to be able to envision possibilities beyond both "dominant and reactionary logics" (Martínez, 2018).

Gutiérrez and Johnson (2017) ask: "how can one *see* dignity in people's everyday lives when the operant analytical lens (e.g., urban, poor, English Learner, "gritless") has already defined the nature and possibility of people and their practices?" (Gutiérrez & Johnson, 2017, p. 249). Espinoza and Vossoughi (2014) note that insofar as learning helps persons and selves flourish, it is "dignity conferring" (p. 287)**.** This counters an ahistorical view of education that dismisses the rich cultural and literacy related skills that all children bring to the table (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Heath, 1983; Jimenez, 2019; Moll et al., 1992; Paris & Alim, 2014; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Restrictive school-based practices such as high-stakes testing wear away at students who have so much more to give. Learning and education are not confined to the classroom, and this study shows the literacy possibilities in an out-of-school-hours program focused on equity and justice.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of community organizing on the literacy practices of children and youth in an intergenerational education justice non-profit in the Bay Area. The group meets on a regular basis in an out-of-school setting to attend the

Children Creating and Transforming program[1] (CCAT), a program for students in elementary and middle school that is part of a larger Bay Area non-profit, Anderson Community Collective[2]. Building on prior experiences as young activists, such as speaking up at San Lucas Unified School District[3] school board meetings and taking part in a Youth Summit for fellow San Lucas Unified middle and high school students, the children engaged in collaborative writing practices/text production to organize, articulate, and elaborate ways that they "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The study explored the extent to which community organizing impacted on the youths' literacy practices to advocate for concrete changes in their schools, in the school district, and in the wider community.

Over a six-month period, I conducted an ethnographic case study of the program, focusing on how community organizing impacts the literacy practices of the children and youth. The study began at the end of June 2019 and ended in the middle of December 2019.

In June and July, summer programming for CCAT youth was held over four weekends for four hours each day. In addition, a group of CCAT youth presented an interactive workshop at two nationwide educational justice conferences, one in July and one in October. In addition to the conference, the process leading up served as data, as did feedback after the conference and the impact of the presentation and of taking part in the conference.

At the end of August, the start of the school year, CCAT meetings began to be held weekly, and youth leadership days were held to prepare for the Teachers 4 Social Justice

[1] Pseudonym
[2] ibid
[3] ibid

conference in October 2019. Weekly meetings addressed issues of education justice and equity, and discussions as to how these can be addressed to effect change.

The data sources used included field notes, voice memos, audio and video recordings with transcriptions, and semi-structured interviews with the youth and the program coordinators.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do children and youth engage in critical literacy practices and political action in an after-school community organization?
2. To what extent does community organizing help the youth in the CCAT program participate in and respond to critical literacy practices?
3. How does community organizing foster critical reflection among the CCAT youth?

Theoretical Framework

This research draws on a critical literacy framework (Janks, 2010; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2014) to examine and analyze dialogic and collaborative literacy practices in an advocacy program for young children. Critical literacy has its antecedents as far back as Ancient Greece, when philosophers like Socrates challenged youth to question dominant ideals and relationships, as read through the bias of linguistic and textual practice (Morrell, 2008). The development of critical theory with the Frankfurt School in the 20th century asked people to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, with humans as social agents being given the language and tools to do so (Morrell, 2008). Paulo Freire (1970) takes this a step further in his pedagogy and theorization, by placing the concept of humanization against the reality

of dehumanization. Freire was influenced by Marx, Engels, Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and the existentialists, as well as the anti-colonial tradition (Morrell, 2008) in developing the "pedagogy of the oppressed," a new and unique formalization of critical literacy as a tool of liberation.

Taking on a critical literacy stance involves the questioning of power dynamics in and out of the classroom (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2014). Community plays an important role in critical literacy interactions, and it can be argued that while literacy is an aspect of an individual's identity, it is also a feature of "the collective and joint capabilities of a group, community or society" (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 4). This echoes the concept of "reading the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Vasquez (2001) seeks to construct spaces where social justice issues are raised and a critical curriculum is negotiated. What remains constant (in critical literacy) is its social justice purpose and commitment to social action, no matter how small (Janks, 2010).

A critical literacy approach involves analysis of how language, power, and race affect our movements and self-identity. Zentella (2007) states that children are socialized *to* language (how they become speakers of their native tongue) and socialized *through* language (how they become culturally competent members of their community). She asserts that reading isn't a magic bullet and stresses that literacy practices of non-dominant groups are as powerful as those of the dominant group. Young children pull from vast linguistic repertoires before formal instruction even begins. They learn the language and culture of their family, community, and social networks; as well as "attitudes, norms, practices, beliefs, experiences, and aspirations" (Gaitan, 2012, p. 307) that guide their learning. A critical literacy stance asserts the interdependency of home and school in all aspects of life and stands in opposition

to pedagogy that assumes children as "blank slates," in particular when it comes to children from minoritized communities.

Before entering the classroom, students "already *are* readers, writers, and analysts of text" (Vasquez, 2014) and this develops from the different communities the children belong to. From a critical position within whole language, Vasquez' work pivoted towards a curriculum tuned in to issues of social justice and equity, with children's critical questions guiding the way (Vasquez, 2001). Critical literacy is a frame or perspective through which to interact with the world both in and out of school. "A critical perspective suggests that deliberate attempts to disrupt inequity in the classroom and society need to become part of our everyday classroom life" (Vasquez, 2014, p.xiii). Learning is holistic and contextualized, leading to greater engagement with schooling and literacy learning outside of school. Just as nothing in education is neutral, no text is neutral. Each text carries with it symbolism and significance, even if it's "just" about farm animals—for example, *Mrs. Wishy-Washy* (Cowley & Fuller, 1999). Vasquez asserts that a critical literacy curriculum is lived, and that teachers need to incorporate a critical perspective into their everyday lives (2014).

Freire (1970) developed literacy programs with adult learners, starting from what the participants already knew. "Literacy for Freire is inherently a political project in which men and women assert their right, a responsibility not only to read, understand and transform their own experiences, but also to reconfigure their relationship with wider society" (Giroux cited in Souto-Manning, 2010, p.27). In this, Freire defines critical literacy as he practices it and as it is relevant to teaching and learning for people of all ages. Freire states that there is a permanent movement back and forth between "reading" reality and reading words, and that it is this dynamic movement that is central to literacy (1985). This echoes a requirement of

critical literacy that it be local and contextualized. This looks very different, depending on the setting and what participants bring with them. For Freire (1970), dialogue is central to learning, and it is only through dialogue that true learning occurs. Dialogue is an iteration of reading the word; through the exchange, participants analyze and synthesize information shared. From here, to reading the world, learning to read and write is meaningful and relevant to our everyday lives.

Janks (2000) asserts that critical literacy education is particularly interested in the relationships between language and power. However, Janks argues, "different realizations of critical literacy operate with different conceptualizations of this relationship by foregrounding one or other of domination, access, diversity or design" (Janks, 2000, p. 176). These four orientations in critical literacy are crucially interdependent and should not, according to Janks, be seen as separate enterprises. An example of their interdependence is that access without an analysis of domination leads to the naturalization of powerful discourses without discussing why these forces are powerful. Another example is that diversity without design means the potential that diversity offers is not realized. Janks writes that we need to hold these elements in productive tension to achieve the key goal of critical literacy, which is to act on issues of social justice and equity (2000).

Educational Significance

This ethnographic case study foregrounds collaborative literacy practices that promote active engagement with issues of education justice and equity. Community organizing inherently involves collaborative and dialogic practices, and this impacts on the children and youth in the CCAT program. Through political education, group discussions,

and rehearsal and repetition of key points related to specific issues, the children and youth were inspired to play a role in developing political discourse, to be applied in diverse settings such as in one-on-one conversations, speaking during school board public comment, and facilitating an interactive workshop at two national education justice conferences, as well as at two smaller events.

Rehearsal and repetition are akin to "low stakes writing" (Elbow, 1997) where the process is equal to, and sometimes more than, the product. The study adds to ongoing research in the fields of community literacies and literacy for social action. This work has potential implications for classroom teachers as well as policy makers and puts the literacy practices of children from minoritized backgrounds in a dynamic and evolving cultural space. Analyzing the data through a critical literacy lens illustrates how component parts of the study serve to interrogate relations of language, power, and privilege.

The flexibility of an out-of-school program centered on education justice offers insights for in-school practices related to language, literacy, and learning. One of the findings of the research highlights the power of the collective and the need to look at social justice issues in the classroom through a community organizing lens, rather than individual displays of activism both in contemporary society and in history. It is also critical that children and youth are able to research and work on topics relevant to their daily lives, rather than ones that may be broadly sanctioned but have less direct impact on them, such as writing about the rainforest with no attendant political analysis. Imagining new futures that involve today's children and youth directly is the work of critical literacy and the work of humanizing pedagogy.

Limitations

One limitation to this study is that data was collected over only a six-month period. Ideally, for an ethnographic case study, data would be collected for a minimum of 18 months. I had been volunteering with the program for almost two years before beginning formal research (once IRB permission was granted), so I knew the children well and had a firm understanding of the growth of the program, but formal research collection only started at the end of June 2019. Another limitation that arose was fluctuating participation in meetings. The children are under no obligation to attend CCAT meetings, as opposed to formal schooling, and attendance often depends on their parents' ability to attend meetings. There was a core group of students, but there was always the possibility of drop-off due to external factors outside of my control. A third limitation is that, as an advocacy organization, Anderson Community Collective attends to current events and critical issues, and this altered CCAT programming, resulting in less time for planned activities that would have brought in more defined literacy practices.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

To accomplish this study, an investigation of dialogic and collaborative literacies for social change, required an understanding and analysis of critical literacy, a pedagogy of multiliteracies, critical digital literacies, writing for civic engagement, and informal (or out-of-school) settings. This chapter addresses scholarly literature on these themes, along with empirical studies to illustrate the affordances of collaborative practices.

Critical Literacy and Writing Practices

As mentioned in Chapter 1, critical literacy can be dated as far back as Ancient Greece (Morrell, 2008). It involves the questioning of power relations, discourses, and identity in the process of fashioning a more just and humane world. Critical literacy is inherently a collaborative process, as students and educators interrogate text in a very broad sense of the term, consider its implications, and plot action steps to take. As Janks (2010) asserts, "Critical literacy resists definition because power manifests itself differently in different contexts and at different historical moments; it is affected by changing technologies and different conditions of possibility" (p. 40). Janks (2010) also affirms that a commitment to social action, no matter how small, is a constant component of a critical literacy approach.

In practice today, a critical literacy approach frequently involves writing or composing multimodal text (Flint & Laman, 2014; Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015; Vasquez, 2014). Composition of multimodal texts involves drawing on what Gutiérrez and Rogoff

(2003) termed “repertoires of practice” and also involves pulling from a range of semiotic practices, such as photography and music. The writing and composing process helps us articulate and organize our thoughts, leading to deeper analysis of power structures and our place in the world.

Comber and Nixon (2014) remarked that early versions of critical literacy in elementary classrooms emphasized the deconstruction and analysis of texts without necessarily involving text production. For example, O’Brien (2001) and her students used Mother’s Day junk mail brochures and catalogs to explore and critique the representation of women in the media and elsewhere. Comber and Nixon (2014) added that more recent attention has been paid to the importance of children’s agency through text production and related social action (Janks, 2010; Janks & Vasquez, 2011). An example of this is Flint and Laman’s (2014) five-year ethnographic study, carried out with educators in the southeastern US. A goal of this study was to explore how elementary teachers developed an understanding of critical literacy through inquiry projects, and how a critical literacy lens informed teaching and learning. Another example is Sahni’s (2001) eighteen-month ethnographic study with children in a rural school in India. Sahni worked with second grade children to integrate a critical literacy approach into the curriculum and to develop creative writing skills. In these two examples, described in more detail below, children’s personal narratives and experiences take center stage, challenging dominant discourses that privilege a standardized curriculum (Flint & Laman, 2014) and rote learning (Sahni, 2001).

Poetry and critical literacy

Through their research with classroom teachers, Flint and Laman (2014) found that

teacher participation in inquiry groups informed classroom practice, with a goal of disrupting the commonplace. For many of the children in Flint and Laman's (Flint & Laman, 2014) study, poetry "provided an unobstructed view of their concerns, thereby opening doors for critical classroom conversations and potential future inquiries" (p. 76). The researchers stated that poetry is a genre that invites resistance, and that poets and poetry have been integral to social movements. Flint and Laman (2014) concluded that writing holds great promise as a curricular space for children to share life experience, knowledge, and emotion.

Flint and Laman (2014) commented that the teachers' familiarity with the writer's workshop model allowed them to see children's writing in new ways, opening a door to curricula practices that honor the life experiences of the students and the inclusion of more critical work in the future. The integration of critical literacy texts with social justice themes provided students the opportunity to write across texts, moving from picture book and textbook formats to poetry. In addition, providing an array of critical mentor texts, such as *Freedom Summer* (Wiles & Lagarrigue, 2005) and *My Name is Jorge on Both Sides of the River* (Medina & Vanden Broeck, 1999), situated students' cultural and linguistic repertoires within an additive perspective. *Freedom Summer* is the story of two friends, one Black and one White, in the summer of 1964; *My Name is Jorge on Both Sides of the River* is a collection of poems told from the viewpoint of a boy who has recently arrived in the U.S. from Mexico. Finally, teachers commented that they knew their students better than ever before. In the face of scripted curriculum aligned with standardized test formats, it is essential that teachers find a place "where poems hide" (Flint & Laman, 2014, p. 80).

Personal narrative and critical literacy

Urvashi Sahni's (2001) study explored how young children appropriated (in this context, "making one's own") literacy. Sahni affirmed that "To appropriate literacy is to add to one's symbolic repertoire, aiding one in interpretive, constructive, creative interaction with the world and others in it" (p. 19). Sahni's initial observations of the classroom led her to understand the setting as alienating, non-responsive, and uncaring. Writing involved merely copying lines from textbooks onto slates, with no time for composition. Thus, the second phase of Sahni's study involved creating spaces of inclusion and participation; as a result, addressing and responding to the opening up of the space was made possible through transforming the political structure of the classroom "from a chain of oppression to several circles of mutuality" (p. 22).

Sahni (2001) noted that, as children began to appropriate a central role in the construction of classroom events, they "decided" that the literacy curriculum should take a performative shape and be woven around poetry, song, drama, and story. She remarked that two focal students used writing for relationship building. One of her focal students transformed interpersonal composing into intrapersonal composing over the period of a few months, with mediated support from Sahni. Another student used writing as a tool to make a connection with Sahni and to form her "circle of mutuality" (p. 29). Both students then found a dialogic context in which to embed their writing. In respect to the first student:

> Using his narrative imagination in this story, he traversed social power boundaries and distances, positioned himself socially, staked his claim to love and respect, and created a respectable, hospitable place for himself in a socially distant world, with his writing. (Sahni, 2001, p. 28)

Over the course of the study, Sahni (2001) discovered that the power of imagination could be harnessed for self-construction and transformation. The social power boundaries traversed by the students began with Sahni as the adult educator. With her support, they developed confidence in their stories and the potential of writing to transform their lived experiences.

Sahni (2001) contended that empowerment pedagogy might not be adaptable to children's practices, as children are too far down on the power ladder to consider it within reach. She noted that, from the children's perspective, empowerment has more to do with relationships than with structures. Sahni asserted that children inhabit a special place as children and that it is more useful to help them compose creative and imaginative stories than to help them acquire the ability to think critically about the realities of their lives. "More than nurturing a sociological imagination in children, empowerment involves nurturing and developing children's narrative imaginations" (Sahni, 2001, p. 32).

While these two examples are from distinct geographic locales with distinct socioeconomic realities, they both highlight the importance of personal narrative as a key component to exploring critical literacy and creative literacy in the classroom. They also highlight personal relationships as central to literacy production. In Sahni's (2001) study, it was relationships with others in the space that motivated the students to produce text, in order to make connections. In Flint and Laman's (2014) study, the teachers found that they knew their students better after working with them on creating poetry.

Sahni (2001) discussed the issue of empowerment in the rural Indian setting, noting that children need to have space to be children. For the students in her research, this was the first time they had generated their own stories and written them down. In the US setting

(Flint & Laman, 2014), the participants (both teachers and students) contended with stultified writing curriculum and uncovered places to disrupt the status quo. Both examples show the possibilities inherent in developing curriculum that places children at the center of the piece, with an eye to critical analysis of the work. While relationships of power and privilege are not foregrounded, the two approaches challenge the hierarchy of teachers over students. The children are building an imaginative base from which to move forward.

A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Dyson and Freedman (1991) wrote that "High levels of literacy depend upon writers' access to and control of available and culturally valued tools—traditionally, books, paper, and writing implements, and increasingly, electronic information technologies" (p. 6). To address this, the New London Group's "pedagogy of multiliteracies" (1996, p. 60) advanced the constructs of multimodal expression, hybridity, and intertextuality. Multimodality involves the use of semiotic tools, such as music, visual art, and dance; as well as more easily recognized forms of expression, such as written scripts, to express complex thought.

Hybridity, as per the New London Group, is the creation of innovative literacy practices and the articulation of new ways to combine modes of meaning. The production of popular music illustrates this, as old and new forms are recombined and restructured (The New London Group, 1996, p. 81). Intertextuality is defined as that which draws attention to the potentially complex ways in which meanings (such as linguistic meanings) are constituted through relationships to other texts. According to the New London Group (1996, p. 81), films embody intertextuality, as they are full of cross references, either explicitly

made by the director or read into by the viewer, based on their own cultural background and history.

Hybridity and intertextuality are key concepts to help describe multimodal meanings and the relationship of different learning designs, leading to a "transformed pedagogy of access" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 72). The New London Group (1996) argued that literacy educators and students "must see themselves as active participants in social change, as active designers and makers of social futures" (p. 72). They presented a "programmatic manifesto" (1996, 63) that highlighted the need for a pedagogy of multiliteracies to ensure full participation of people in and with literacy tasks. This manifesto formed the groundwork for a greater understanding of multimodal and digital text as it has evolved over the past couple of decades. In this way, the New London Group put forward a radically different approach to literacy and a call to action for all educators.

> A pedagogy of multiliteracies focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. Multiliteracies also create a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes. (The New London Group, 1996, p. 64)

A pedagogical focus on multiliteracies involves educators looking to the possibilities of expression through non-verbal—as well as verbal—means, thus providing access for a greater number of learners. A design for learning that incorporates multiliteracies overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how "negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of the students" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 71). Living

multimodal lives, we use a range of modalities to express ourselves in the everyday, so this then needs to be included in pedagogical practice and educational settings.

A pedagogy of multiliteracies, as first developed by the New London Group (1996), can be a vital part of a curriculum seeking to support identity construction of the individual and the group. Identity construction is inherently multimodal, in that students "can perform and ascribe to other learner identities not typically available in verbocentric secondary English classrooms" (Chisholm & Olinger, 2017, p. 122). Chisholm and Olinger (2017) noted that research into multimodal composing is often analyzed for product not for process, especially in the secondary classroom. The authors wrote that learner identity shapes work and participation, and educators must consider the processes "whereby multimodal composing unfolds, identities privileged or marginalized during multimodal tasks, and the collaboration dynamics during student-led instructional activities" (Chisholm & Olinger, 2017, p. 123). If we seek to understand the learning process students employ, it is as important to look at the process behind text production as it is to look at the final product. This involves observing decisions made and the reasoning behind these—for example, when choosing a still image over a short video, or when selecting musical themes and lyrics to accompany these and other multimodal choices students make.

Critical Digital Literacies

Engaging with digital literacies is increasingly part of the language arts classroom, and digital media are increasingly present in children's lives. Jenkins et al. (2009) noted that new media literacies include the traditional literacy that evolved with print culture, as well as the newer forms of literacy in mass and digital media. Children and youth must still be able

to read and write in a conventional manner. It is from this that creation occurs, akin to modern dancers benefitting from a solid foundation in ballet in order to push back against the classical tradition. Jenkins et al. (2009) stressed that youth must expand required competencies, rather than pushing aside old skills, that new media should be considered a social skill, and that a focus on negative effects of media consumption offers an incomplete picture.

> These accounts do not appropriately value the skills and knowledge young people are gaining through their involvement with new media, and as a consequence, they may mislead us about the roles teachers and parents should play in helping children learn and grow. (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 11)

Retaining a critical lens on media consumption and production is an essential skill in today's educational landscape. Mirra (2018) emphasized that a push for *21st century learning* (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2016) conflates economics with democracy; she asserts that neoliberal thinking is driving many of the practices being put in place around technology in schools. In contrast, scholars such as Garcia (2014) and Mirra (2018), who focus on the use of critical digital literacies, have upheld "connected learning" as a pedagogy committed to collective civic engagement through the use of technological tools. Connected learning draws on the field of new literacy studies (Street, 2006) and multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996); it requires critical thought and a concern for equity (Mirra, 2018). Instead of a digital tool taking precedence, content and intention come first and then the appropriate tool is chosen. Equity-oriented practices involve building a generous learning environment that emphasizes shared activity, process, and iteration (Vossoughi et al., 2013).

Digital story production

Pandya and Ávila (2013) defined critical digital literacies as the skills and practices leading to the creation of digital texts that critique the world, as well as allow and foster the interrogation of digital, multimedia texts. Pandya and Pagdilao (2015) worked with fourth grade students in a Southern California charter school to create digital stories about the people in their community, called "A Day in the Life." Pandya and Pagdilao's study constituted part of a larger, design-based research project where the authors engaged in yearlong cycles of video making and data collection. The research team visited the school site twice a week, planning with teachers and facilitating student groups. For this project, the children used community members as sources of curricular knowledge. The project positioned children as the designers of powerful texts drawing on the lived experiences of people in their community.

The children made videos that they showed to their peers, teachers, interview subjects, and families—real, local audiences (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015). In small groups, the children decided what questions to ask, who to interview, and how to structure their videos. Although the children had some adult guidance, Pandya and Pagdilao (2015) highlighted the ways in which the children were active designers of the content, structure, and tone of their projects. The authors remarked that students conducted extensive one-on-one interviews in and out of school, wrote down long complex answers, and translated those answers into digital video scripts in which they re-voiced people's lives.

The literacy demands of this project in Pandya and Pagdilao's (2015) study were heightened by the demands of the multimodal composing platform. In their multimodal analyses, Pandya and Pagdilao (2015) traced the messages children created in each mode and

tried to understand the ways the children made meaning across and in multiple modes that differed from, and often surpassed, the meanings they might make monomodally. These analyses helped the authors work with teachers and children to create critical digital video projects, "ones in and through which children can, to paraphrase Luke (2014), name and redesign their worlds" (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015, p. 39).

In Pandya and Pagdilao's (2015) study, children enacted critical digital literacies in two ways. First, the children named their worlds by describing adults' jobs and personal lives, showing understanding of the demands of adults' jobs, and by sympathizing with them, among other skills. The researchers note that "Naming allowed children to explore and investigate the kinds of work done by people in their communities and purposefully incorporated the life worlds of children (and their video subjects) into schoolwork" (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015, p. 43). The second way the children enacted critical digital literacies was as designers of videos that conveyed messages about work to the school community. "Children not only learned about adults' lives, but also re-voiced those lives in their videos, filtering interview questions and answers through their own ideologies about work and adults' lives" (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015, p. 43). The production of these short videos led to a greater understanding of how multimodal tools and digital media can be used to frame stories of high interest and relevance to elementary grade children.

Podcasting

Podcasting is another digital tool that can be used by young children to interrogate relations of power and privilege. A partnership between Vasquez, a university researcher, and Felderman, a second grade teacher, led to a podcasting project with Felderman's class, as

a way of creating space for critical literacies (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013). After listening to a variety of podcasts, Felderman's children were curious about this technological tool and wanted to try it for themselves. They decided to focus their show on the various ways they could help change inequities in their school and beyond. They chose the title "100% Kids" to show that the topics stemmed directly from their own interests, such as global warming, animal rights, and other equity issues at school.

An issue of equity that arose early on in Felderman's classroom was that the podcast was only in English, while more than half of the children's families didn't speak English as a first language. One of the students whose parents spoke Spanish raised this point as a challenge to the project; when she brought this up, she was supported by students in the class who spoke other home languages such as Arabic and Urdu. The ensuing dialogue led to discussion about exclusion and inclusion (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013).

Although Felderman was unsure how the podcast could be translated into all the home languages of the class, the children were motivated to plan how they might approach this, such as volunteering to write scripts in different languages (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013). Ultimately, the students were unable to translate the show into multiple languages, but they were able to make the podcast more accessible for Spanish speakers at least. In doing so, the children's awareness of audience expanded to include notions of "access, domination, diversity, and privilege" (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013, p. 45). Audience became "a much more complex body located in time and space" (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013, p. 45). The students discussed ways in which privileged community practices, such as speaking English as a dominant language, advantages some and disadvantages others.

In summary, the "Day in the Life" project (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015) and the "100%

Kids" podcast (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013) gave children the opportunity to design learning experiences that took them out of the classroom and that involved community as a curricula resource. The "Day in the Life" project drew from intergenerational life stories with the school community as participants and as audience. The "100% Kids" podcast had an international audience, as people listened in from countries all around the world. Adults coordinated both projects, but the children had input into what they wanted to share and how they wanted to do so. While the "Day in the Life" project didn't have as specific a social justice focus as the "100% Kids" podcast, it drew on social justice concepts of understanding community dynamics and relations of work and opportunity. As Christensen (2009) states, narrative writing is at the heart of the social justice classroom, and this was made real by bringing in community narratives. Both projects centered personal narrative and experience, thus validating children's lives and experience.

Collaborative Writing: Digital Media

Collaboration with an eye to equity is a key component of social justice spaces. I examined literature about collaborative writing through multimodal means and digital media (including class blogs and wikis), as I would be studying multimodal learning in the out-of-school site. As Chisholm and Olinger (2017) wrote, "dialogic approaches foster *collaboration*, which requires ongoing dialogue among authors whose contributions shape and are shaped by the emerging composition" (p. 125, emphasis in original). On the other hand, *cooperation* may stem from a hierarchical approach, whereby each member completes a discrete portion of the task. Collaborative work ideally involves each participant drawing on their strengths to contribute to the whole. Knobel and Lankshear (2017) contended that

the work of leveraging what digital media young people know and engage in, with an explicit educational focus, provides opportunities for *collaborative* production of knowledge and solutions to material, as well as "academic" problems, rather than continuing to emphasize *individualized* consumption and assessment of subject area content (p. 11).

Multimodal production may lead to students foregrounding skills they are unable to draw upon in the "verbocentric" (Chisholm & Olinger, 2017, p. 122) classroom, such as photography and music. Digital literacies and multimodal production offer many opportunities for collaboration in the classroom and beyond; for example, students may take photos of the neighborhood and compose music to accompany the images. Jenkins et al (2009) note that while digital media and multimodal production do not displace traditional print-based literacies, the emergence of new digital modes of expression has changed our relationship with printed text.

Class blog

Critical digital literacy assignments position children as problem-posing learners and as designers of curricula material. For example, Christopher Working (2014), a teacher with the Red Cedar Writing Project, carried out a teacher research project to explore how digital media could support his third grade students in writing a class blog. He believed that digital technology could be used as a tool to facilitate young people's participation in dialogue, writing, and action on social issues about which they care—not simply for the purely recreational uses that adults often assume are the sole interest of youth.

As the project developed, Working found that his students were less worried about what they thought the teacher wanted and more interested in writing an interesting piece that

would capture the attention of their classmates. Evidence surfaced that showed students were making direct changes and improvement in their writing based solely upon peer suggestions, students were more collaborative, and new leaders began to appear. In composing entries for the blog, the children built on peer feedback, not just feedback from the teacher, thus altering power dynamics to some degree (Working, 2014). Also, participating in a learning process that embraced student interests led this group of third-grade students to take an active role in their own learning. Working observed that students were identifying what they needed to learn, and they were seeking this out from newly established social networks, face to face as well as online. As producers of text, they had a ready audience for their writing and were able to get feedback in a timely manner (Working, 2014).

Wikis

Wikis are simple websites that can be collectively written and edited. Grace Cornell used wikis with her fourth grade students to explore the central question of how the border affected their lives (Cornell, 2012). Cornell facilitated a collaborative writing experience by encouraging the group members to outline and research the websites together, to read and discuss each other's contributions to their wikis, and to revise each other's pages. "As students work collaboratively to make their websites, they write and talk their way into not only a deeper understanding of the English language, but also of the world they live in. They begin, slowly but surely, to identify injustices and construct their own imaginative visions of a more just world" (Cornell, 2012p. 40).

Cornell noted that the beauty of wikis as an instructional tool is that they give students the sense that they are doing real writing, in a real-world genre and for an authentic

audience. As a result of engaging in collaborative writing using wikis, the students' participation began to change their concepts of themselves, and the students also talked about how their writing improved when it was something "the whole world could see" (p. 42). One of the groups of students interviewed family members in order to write up oral histories centered on the question of the border—in particular, family stories of crossing the border. The members of this group decided to make their website bilingual so that their families could access it, despite the challenge of reteaching themselves and others the Spanish language. Rescuing their language skills, often with help from their parents, led to the experience being deeply meaningful for all concerned.

Literacies for Civic Engagement

A strong motivator for using collaborative writing in an educational setting is the ability to build on the strengths of the community members as a whole. Collaborative work is part of "participatory culture" (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 3), roughly defined by Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) as having relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for collaboration, and a strong sense of connection to the community. Participatory culture, according to Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015), extends how we communicate and produce; as a result, it can lead students towards both powerful and tempered notions of civic engagement. The authors maintain that civic engagement explicitly involves acting for social change and transformation.

Collaborative literacies for social change require a commitment to civic action and engagement. As defined by Garcia and O'Donnell (2015), "Civic engagement is being able to understand and sort through competing perspectives and then to participate in localized

discourse to determine the appropriate actions the community should take" (p. 59). Civics is often taught in schools as a stand-alone topic in a social studies curriculum. Civics, however, "must be a constant and persistent thread throughout education, especially because schools are charged with preparing students to participate in our democracy" (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015, p. 62).

Collaborative work may happen within a collective of learners and teachers. Thomas, Stornaiuolo, and Campano (2018) contended that "working as a collective has the potential advantage of bringing more experiences, angles of vision, and subordinated intellectual legacies to bear on educational phenomena" (p. 98). This is at the heart of civic engagement. Thomas et al (2018) acknowledged that conceptualizing alternative educational arrangements was made easier through a multiplicity of perspectives and lived experience. A distinction between collaboration and the collective is that working within a collective does not necessarily entail everyone working together on specific projects. Within the collective, different groups can form to work collaboratively. Both terms involve looking out for each other and drawing on strengths, and there is some fluidity in the definitions. Collectivities, as Thomas et al. (2018) described, are characterized by diversity of experience and opinion, and unity is not necessarily needed in order for the work to be transformative. Civic engagement requires both collective and collaborative work to enact a social agenda that leads to transformational change.

Digital media and the networking opportunities that arise are tools for both discovering and participating in civic action in ways unknown to previous generations. Writing opportunities that arise using digital tools allow for collaboration, discussion, and exploration across time and space in a way that is constantly evolving. Garcia and

O'Donnell-Allen (2015) wrote that, for youth, "writing is no longer tethered to production with paper and pencil, but more broadly involves the 'making of artifacts' " (p. 63). Middaugh and Kahne (2013) remarked that developments in new media over the last 20+ years have brought about new possibilities and new challenges for participation in civic and political life. For children and youth, digital networks assist in communication across time and space, and often allow for peer-to-peer interaction that was previously difficult to access. Middaugh and Kahne (2013) affirmed that digital networks enhance the capacity of youth to discover narratives and to enter into conversation with others on topics vital to their lives. Multimodal productions can be shared with a wide audience, with peer feedback a motivating factor in presenting a clear and coherent argument and/or position statement.

Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) highlighted that "enacting literacy is a civic action" (p. 58). In his high school English class, Garcia (2015) used canonical text (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) plus a documentary (on a bus hijacking in Brazil) to explore with high school students the concept and constructs of monstrosity. The students scrutinized the actions of the monsters in these texts and how they were seen as such. From here, the class moved to discussing the graffiti community of Los Angeles, turning an analytical eye as to how different groups view this community. They then developed policy recommendations shared publicly in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. Garcia (2015) noted that the civic expectations of the unit were not that the students had to take a stand on the issue of graffiti but that they could feel they had a voice on the issue. By contacting local media, forwarding their writing to members of the city council, and organizing an informational presentation for their peers, the students were able to speak to various audiences about what graffiti meant within their communities (Garcia & O'Donnell-

Allen, 2015).

Out-of-school Settings

Much of the research previously mentioned takes place in a classroom setting. However, a growing body of research focuses on learning in out-of-school settings and sets up a healthy debate as to what each setting (in-school and out-of-school) has to offer the other, and to uncover common principles of learning (Ash & Wells, 2006). Equity-oriented research on OST (out-of-school time) environments "seeks to substantively widen our definitions of where and how learning takes place, challenge deficit ideologies, and reimagine education more broadly" (Vossoughi, 2017). Literacy practices in an out-of-school setting may foster greater flexibility to focus on the process rather than immediate product, and this can serve as an example of what deep and socially meaningful academic engagement might look like (Vossoughi, 2017).

Hull and Schultz (2002b) wrote that over the years Brian Street repeatedly raised the question: "When there are so many different types of literacy practice, why is it that school literacy has come to be seen as the defining form of reading and writing?" (p. 23)**.** Hull and Schultz (2002b) also pose the question: "What would our conception of literacy be like had researchers such as Hymes, Heath, Scribner, Cole, Street, and Gee never ventured in their formulations outside of schools, either literally or figuratively?" (p. 27). Ash and Wells (2006) asserted that one setting (either formal or informal) is not better than the other theoretically or practically, that we must uncover the characteristics and learning principles that cut across both contexts, and that these must be taken into account in all informal education. Alverman (Alverman & Moore, 2011) asserts that we need to question the idea

that there is a divide between in-school and out-of-school literacies that needs to be bridged, and that young people use multimodal literacies (and more) that defy simple categorizations of in-school and out-of-school learning.

In both formal and informal learning, students benefit from drawing on what Luke and Freebody (1999) called "families of practice" (p. 4) and what Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) called "repertoires of practice" (p. 19). Luke & Freebody (1999) affirmed that the notion of "practice" (p. 4) implies active participation and evolving skill levels, and the notion of "family" (p. 4) suggests that practices are "dynamic, being redeveloped, recombined, and articulated in relation to one another on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). Gutiérrez (2008) asserted that the concept of "repertoires of practice" capture both horizontal and vertical forms of expertise—not only what students learn in school, but also what they learn in a range of practices outside school, and the interplay between these settings.

Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland, and Pierce (2011) emphasize that "These hybrid language and literacy practices—that is, practices with the properties of both formal and informal language and/or home- and school-based language practices—entail students drawing on their full linguistic toolkit to learn and make meaning" (p. 237). As Souto-Manning and Yoon (2018) illustrated in their work with teachers across the United States, the more an individual participates in different contexts, the more linguistic flexibility they must maneuver to identify and be identified as an active member of that cultural community. For children and youth today, the advent of digital media and digital writing potentially opens the way for greater dialogue, collaboration, and participation than before. It also opens the way to a greater number of possible contexts to move within. This is not accomplished solely by

use of digital tools; rather, the tools must fit a learning objective, such as creating a collaborative blog to discuss educational injustice and what can be done to address this issue.

When students are recognized as members of a community, and the world outside school is understood as the audience for text-designing, the impact is greater than if literacy tasks are restricted to school-sanctioned tasks (Bomer, 2017). Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) stated that focusing on repertoires of practice guides people to develop dexterity in determining which approach from their repertoire is appropriate under which circumstances. The educator's role is to help students identify the linguistic contexts they inhabit and the repertoires of practice they draw on, as well as to give students ample time to explore these in depth with expert guidance (Vossoughi et al., 2013). Moll (2000) writes that "We (teachers and researchers) have set out to develop intentional educational communities: a new imagined school or classroom community, grounded in social relationships with families, and intentionally defined by the knowledge and resources found in local households" (p. 264). The "Funds of Knowledge" research that Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González (1992) carried out serves as a foundation for educators in formal and informal settings. Applying a critical funds of knowledge framework informs both content and pedagogy in an intentional manner.

Summary

Collaborative literacies/writing for social change involves a commitment to consistent reflection and revision of content, context, purpose, and audience. A critical literacy frame may involve questioning received information, analyzing this through lenses of "access, dominance, design and diversity" (Janks, 2000), and producing text in response (Vasquez, 2014). It may also involve using personal narrative as critical text, in the form of poems

(Flint & Laman, 2014) or storytelling (Sahni, 2001).

Just over 20 years ago, the New London Group (1996) advanced the concept of multiliteracies to expand access and pedagogy beyond traditional linguistic expression. This "programmatic manifesto" (p. 60) presented a radical challenge to literacy pedagogies of the time, and it supported practitioners and researchers who took a more holistic view of literacy education. Our reasons for producing media and communicating thought and practice have not changed since the dawn of human time; the growth of new online tools has not changed our desire to communicate and to connect with others. Yet, how we do this is an eon away from etchings on cave walls. Writing is still a skill to foster within teaching and mentoring relationships. As well as helping us tell and share stories, the role writing plays in organizing our thoughts and articulating points of view cannot be underestimated. Jenkins et al (2009) stressed that expanding access to new technologies can only take us so far if we do not foster the skills and cultural knowledge necessary to mold these to our own desires.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the sociocultural needs of all learners as we navigate these new fields. Digital media is one way of supporting collaborative practices; for example, the "Day in the Life" videos (Pandya & Pagdilao, 2015), podcasts (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013), blog entries (Working, 2014), wikis (Cornell, 2012), and taking part in civic action with literacy at the center (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015). Collaboration on tasks involves many different skills, and participation looks different from one project to the next. If we take the words of Garcia and O'Donnell-Allen (2015) to heart—that "enacting literacy is a civic action" (p. 58)—then we stay close to the needs of the community and to the collective as whole.

Definitions of literacy may change, but its purpose remains tied to understanding the

human condition and to writing our way into history, as localized as that may be. Literacy is not a tool, as that would imply neutrality; rather, it serves to support or contest lived realities, and to open up avenues of creative expression for dreaming and planning for a more just world. A critical literacy lens applied to collaborative writing composed by the youth in the CCAT program and tied to civic engagement brings the CCAT community together to enact powerful change in their lives. Identifying the elements that are key to enacting change and transformation will inform practice, here and in the future. We are never as strong as when we work together, and we never learn as much as when we write together for the future our children deserve.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the impact of community organizing on the literacy practices of children and youth in an intergenerational non-profit in the Bay Area.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do children and youth engage in critical literacy practices and political action in an after-school community organization?
2. To what extent does community organizing help the children and youth in the CCAT program participate in and respond to critical literacy practices?
3. How does community organizing foster critical reflection among the CCAT children and youth?

Research Design

This study used ethnographic methodologies to collect and analyze data. I primarily drew on the following events that were undertaken by children and youth in the Children Creating and Transforming (CCAT) program at Anderson Community Collective: 1) the creation of an interactive workshop (#OurEducationWillNotBePoliced) on policing in schools, 2) writing a speech to be read during public comment at a school board meeting, 3) planning a podcast, and 4) taking part in the Halloween *Trick or Chant for Liberation*[4]. Data

[4] Trick or Chant was a modified "trick or treat" event, where the children took the chants to their communities, asking for rights as well as Halloween candy.

was collected using field notes, interviews with participants, and a reflective journal and memos.

It can be argued that ethnography and its methods are among the most comprehensive and rigorous approaches in the research field, not just in terms of data collection but also in the person of the researcher (Kirkland, 2014). The ethnographic researcher engages in a "textured transaction between expectations and ethics, representation, responsibility, respect" (Kirkland, 2014, p. 180). The data collected in an ethnographic study must allow for broad interpretation and personalization of data involving "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) in order "to get at the patterns behind how a specific action takes place in terms of its context" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 43).

Qualitative research has become *the* site of philosophical and methodological revolt against positivism (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). Essential to this work are a rejection of positivism and the promotion of a stance that takes on board sociocultural learning and contextualized literacy practices that humanize and lift up all children. Ethnographic data helps us capture the voices and experiences of the "breathtakingly diverse" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) children (and adults) we work with. Ethnography is theory-building and theory-dependent (Heath & Street, 2008). Ethnographies construct, test, and amplify theoretical perspectives "through systemic observation, records, and analyzing of human behavior in specifiable spaces and interactions" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 38). All ethnographic research is inherently interpretive, subjective, and partial (Heath & Street, 2008).

I analyzed the data using the constant comparative method (Heath & Street, 2008). A recursive process occurs when we are carrying out ethnographic studies. We develop initial

hunches based on the data and test these against the findings of other researchers. We then take this information with us into the field and collect data that will confirm—or deny—our original hunches. The data we collect in the field, in turn, informs subsequent hunches, and the process continues. Heath & Street (2008) comment that only with the constant comparative can ethnographers get beyond everyday preconceptions about a particular group or situation.

I selected ethnographic methodologies as they are best suited to the goal of the study: to explore how community organizing impacts the literacy practices of a group of children and youth in an out-of-school-hours space. A range of ethnographic tools, such as participant observations, meeting transcripts, and semi-structured interviews, allowed for insight into how children and youth engage in literacy practices and how these practices inform personal and political actions.

Research Setting

The setting for this study is an advocacy based non-profit organization in the Bay Area. Since 1975, Anderson Community Collective has pioneered programs and policies to expand opportunity for San Lucas's children, youth, and families. Its agenda has expanded from its original mission to stop the city from housing abused and neglected children in juvenile hall, to its current mission of building more effective, equitable, and supportive public schools in San Lucas Unified School District and beyond, as well as "fighting to advance rights, safety and full inclusion of low-income people of color" (as per the organization's website). One of the CCAT youth explained that Anderson fights for education justice and "we fight against racism in schools, like how to keep Students of Color

from getting criminalized, and things like that" (Vienna, October 11th, 2019). Another CCAT youth said she loves what Anderson does for social justice and the change it makes to people, and now she wants to be a lawyer, to get involved with law so she can fix the issues affecting her family (Talia in conversation with Yasmin, July 14th, 2019).

In the 1980s, the organization was instrumental in the creation of an Office for Children, Youth, and their Families; in the early 1990s, San Lucas became the first city in the country to guarantee funding each year for children (Lee, 2008). In the early 90s, the organization initiated two new projects that put organizational members at the center: one a youth-led advocacy program and the other involving grassroots parent leaders (Carnochan & Austin, 2011). A planning process in 2006 led to a Strategic Plan that articulated the organization's aim of creating a pioneering hybrid model integrating policy advocacy and grassroots organizing, with the leadership development of young people and parents at the center (Carnochan & Austin, 2011, p. 103). "The [strategic] plan clarified that while [the organization] seeks to improve the lives of all children, its core constituency is low- to moderate-income families, the majority of whom are families of color" (Carnochan & Austin, 2011, p. 103).

According to Carnochan and Austin (2011), strategies and considerations that the organization has worked with throughout its existence are (a) comprehensive and rigorous data collection, (b) use of information as a tool to gain access, (c) willingness to incur hostility on the part of individuals in power, (d) balancing cooperation and criticism to optimize the response of those with power, and (e) continuously seeking additional sources of funding to achieve organizational stability and permanency (Carnochan & Austin, 2011, p. 93). A core value of the organization is coalitional work with other community organizations

"to build a *movement* capable of winning long term, systemic social policy change because we cannot achieve our vision alone" (Lee, 2008).

Also central to Anderson's work is intergenerational organizing. The CCAT program coordinator, Bonnie, commented that she first fell in love with Anderson for how it organizes the entire family**.**

> That's been a really beautiful thing to see: moms and dads and sisters and brothers all come here with the collective goal. We want to make education better for ourselves, for the children, for our grandchildren. Then getting families from all over the city to come together and create that collective vision. It's been a beautiful thing. (Bonnie, Interview, October 23rd, 2019)

Safe and supportive schools resolution

In 2014 the SLUSD school board voted to pass the Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution with a goal of addressing disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of Black and Brown youth. Bonnie explained that "of course our district is still finding ways to suspend our students and keep it under wraps" (informal conversation, September 19th, 2019). Bonnie added that the school board needs to be accountable to keeping students in class and "not only in class, but safe in class and loving what they're learning" (informal conversation, September 19th, 2019). The ultimate goal of the organization is to create schools in which all students not only survive but thrive (Love, 2019).

One of the CCAT youth, Marta, expressed a concrete example of how Anderson supports safe and supportive experiences in school. In a facilitation practice for an activity

that was part of the workshop #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced she said (in response to a hypothetical comment about not feeling safe and secure at school)

> Well I understand what you're saying, and I've also gone through it too, but the way that I went through it was like I tried, I told my mom about it and she, because of Anderson, had support and help from Anderson and they helped her. They went to the school and talked to the principal and had to sort things out, like what the school had to change in order for me to feel safe and supported at that school, and then when that happened I started feeling more safe, and I trusted the students and the teachers more. (Marta, July 9th, 2019)

ACT Now campaign

In November of 2019 Anderson Community Collective launched the ACT Now campaign (Accountability, Consistency and Transparency), which called on the mayor, board of supervisors, and school district to follow through on promises made to address inequities in San Lucas's schools. The current climate in San Lucas is favorable to making big changes, as there is progressive leadership on the school board and former school board members on the Board of Supervisors. The November 2019 elections saw a progressive DA beat out an establishment candidate, and this is encouraging in terms of addressing the ongoing criminalization of students in San Lucas's schools.

Anderson's executive director wrote that San Lucas can end the racial disparities in criminalization/discipline and academics and provide supportive culture in public schools once and for all (Press release, October 2019). The director went on to say that, through the current campaign, Anderson will hold the school district and the city accountable to Black,

Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Native families of San Lucas, "building an education system that works for all students, serving as a model for the nation" (from the organization's website). San Lucas has the dubious distinction of having one of the largest racial achievement gaps in the country, and the suspension rate of Black students is over 4 times the district suspension rate average.

Anderson is now entering its 45th year, an event worthy of celebration. While much remains to be done in the district and nationwide, Anderson as an organization exists to support members and to ensure that all students in San Lucas Unified receive an education worthy of them and their talents. As a member-led organization Anderson is accountable to its members at the same time it holds those in power accountable. It also provides essential leadership training for its members, with a focus on communal knowledge and action.

Children Creating and Transforming Program

I started volunteering with Children Creating and Transforming (CCAT) in August of 2017, after seeing an ad looking for people to help out with the fledgling program. I was already familiar with Anderson Community Collective through an event at the University of San Francisco, but until CCAT came along there weren't opportunities to work with youth in elementary and middle school; elementary education is my area of expertise. I met with Bonnie and was immediately impressed with what she was doing with the program and with her vision for future actions. Bonnie established the CCAT program during a six-month internship at Anderson in 2016, as part of her Community Studies Major at a local university. The PCAT (Parents Creating and Transforming) and the YCAT (Youth Creating and

Transforming) programs had been underway for a couple of decades before that, and childcare was available for the PCAT meetings—but it lacked a critical edge.

The CCAT children and youth meet at the same time as the PCAT members. During the school year, this is generally Tuesday from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. During the summer, meetings happen for four weeks on a Friday and a Saturday. In addition to these meetings, the older children in the CCAT program meet about once a month for a Captains' Day. The Captains' Days are an opportunity to delve deeper into leadership skills and opportunities, and to work on ways to teach and learn with a larger audience, such as at education justice conferences. The workshop #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced—a major source of data for this study—was created and developed on Captains' Days.

CCAT programming is fluid, and, while planning is always done ahead of time, topics such the 2018 Parkland massacre may require a shift in focus. After the Parkland massacre, the CCAT children and youth discussed the topic and made placards to be used during the March for our Lives (March 24th, 2018). More recently, a campaign to paint over racist murals in a local high school needed CCAT support, and the announcement of SLUSD budget cuts saw Anderson members out in force at the following school board meeting. Programming is also tied to organization wide foci such as the A.C.T. Now (Accountability, Consistency and Transparency) campaign that seeks to ensure implementation of past school district resolutions such as the 2014 Safe and Supportive Schools resolution.

CCAT meetings are a space for political education on topics such as systems of oppression; sources of power; working against racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and ableism; and more. When asked at a Captain's Day meeting (July 9th, 2019) what they learn at CCAT, Kelly said that they get to talk "about Brown people and Black people and stuff

like racism." At the same meeting, Vienna said they are educated on things some people don't know are happening inside schools, while Marta said she gets education and knowledge, and she learns leadership skills.

Meetings are also a place to discuss actions to take. This includes speaking up during public comment at school board meetings and being present in support of resolutions such as Our Healing Our Hands (a youth-led mental health support resolution). Actions have also included taking part in demonstrations and speaking during press conferences for issues such as the closing of Juvenile Hall. Inside of schools, CCAT student leaders have helped set up a Know Your Rights club at a district middle school, and the coordinators have been active within a Black Student Union at another district middle school, as well as supporting political education at this school. The coordinators have also set up a program for Black girls at a district elementary school.

At a recent CCAT meeting Bonnie asked the children and youth to write down what the biggest issues were for them at school. Responses included harassment from security guards, badly maintained facilities such as the toilets, and ineffective teaching methods. Bonnie asserted:

> Might seem like small things, but they have huge histories and context to them. Because your principals don't hold all the power. Your teachers don't hold all the power. So all of these issues that you just wrote down on your paper, they matter. Okay? And they're not just small issues. They're huge things that can affect your future and affect the future of students like you, Students of Color. And when you come here—when your parents come here and they bring you, or you come because

> you want to come—you're coming because Anderson fights to make change, positive change, in the schools. (Bonnie, October 15th, 2019)

Bonnie notes that for many of the children and youth, CCAT (and Anderson) is a safe space. She comments that they deal with a lot of stuff outside, and they come to CCAT to get away. One of the youth said, "I come here, and you guys always make me feel safe. I feel like I can't wait to get here" (as reported by Bonnie, Interview, July 26, 2019). It is like an oasis for them (Bonnie, Interview, July 26, 2019). During the 2019 summer program, Bonnie introduced the program to newcomers as a place where we can come together and talk about what needs to be done in schools, and actually do something about it. Vienna notes that she sees that people want to learn about these things, and they want to make it better. (Vienna, Interview, July 19, 2019) Bonnie adds that it's also a place for people to learn and to work together (June 29, 2019).

> I think about the seeds we planted back last year, the ways that they're sprouting and showing up now. A lot of the kids are growing and transforming in their leadership and in their knowledge, and it's just been a beautiful thing to watch. I know one of the things I can track back to last year was when Marta started coming to CCAT and when her mom first started bringing her, she was really shy. She didn't really want to engage. She had an incident at one of her schools where we had to go and help advocate for her. I think that really built a lot of trust with her. She wanted to come and get more involved. (Bonnie, Interview, October 23, 2019)

The CCAT space is uniquely positioned to support children's and youths' academic skills, coupled with political education directly relevant to their lives. This political program shares the fundamentals of the parent-led group and the youth-led group and is a very welcome

addition to the family. Having a program such as CCAT, that respects the knowledge and experience of young children and sees them as full actors in their lives, breathes joy and wisdom into the organization as a whole.

Participants

I was hoping to work one-on-one with the participants, so I could hear directly from them how they describe themselves. COVID-19 put a stop to that. Here I have abbreviated profiles of the children and youth. The names are all pseudonyms, but only Vienna was able to choose her own pseudonym at this stage. The other children have names that I have given them, with the possibility of changing them later.

Youth participants

Clara is twelve years old and in sixth grade. She has an older sister, Marta, and a younger brother. Her family is from Mexico. Clara often volunteers for tasks and pays close attention to what is asked of her and others. She takes notes, both on the computer and by hand, as meetings unfold. This helps her organize her thoughts and helps others who benefit from her care and attention. Clara was proud of herself for speaking up during the workshop in Minneapolis. While she didn't speak as much as some of the other participants, she was an integral part of the process. Bonnie noted that Clara is a really good storyteller and that people really listen to her. This is a strength of her leadership. One of her goals is to help people new to CCAT and welcome them in. Clara openly shares that she needs extra support at school; she, along with her mother, advocates for herself and her needs. She prepared a speech regarding resources to share at the school board, but she hasn't had a chance to share

it yet. Her commitment to the program is clear, and she will drop by after soccer practice when possible, even if her mother doesn't come to the PCAT meeting.

Kelly is twelve years old and is in 6th grade. She is Bonnie's niece and is African American. Kelly lives outside of the Bay Area, so she isn't able to be as much a part of the program as she would be if she lived closer. Kelly was involved with the workshop on overpolicing and came with us to Minneapolis and to San Francisco. Bonnie notes that Kelly brings a lot of knowledge and joy to the Anderson setting. In reference to the workshop, Bonnie affirmed that bringing joy is important, as the topic of policing school students is emotional, heavy, and triggering for a lot of people. Kelly brings humor and positive energy to the group, and it is always a pleasure to have her with us. She keeps people entertained, and she teaches at the same time.

Lorena is thirteen years old, and she is in 7th grade. She has been involved with the CCAT program from the start; her mom works with the PCAT program. Lorena has a younger sister and an older sister who are also involved with Anderson. Her family is from Mexico. She was a key participant in the workshop in the early stages, but she wasn't able to be part of the workshop at Free Minds Free People, as she went to Mexico with her sisters to spend time with family there. Lorena has spoken up at school board meetings on many occasions, starting at least two years ago. Lorena shows a keen understanding of the topics and issues affecting her life, and her commitment to the program is evident, in that she attends almost every meeting and event and is always an active participant.

Marta is fourteen years old and in 9th grade. She has been involved with the CCAT program for over a year. She played a key role in the workshop and took the school-to-prison pipeline as a topic. She has a younger sister, Clara, who was also part of the workshop, and a

younger brother. Marta's family is from Mexico and El Salvador. Marta is a very keen soccer player, and last year she went to Spain to train with a team there. Marta is proud of herself for keeping up with her many commitments, and while she said she gets frustrated, she said a goal of hers is to take the right path and be better today than she was yesterday. A favorite quote of hers is "Avoid unchallenging occasions, they will waste your great talent."

Talia is twelve years old and she is in 6th grade. She has been involved with the CCAT program from the beginning. Talia has an older sister and a younger brother who are both part of Anderson. Talia's family is from Mexico. All three siblings are active members in the organization, and Talia often comes to Anderson even when her mother isn't able to come to the PCAT meeting. Talia's older sister was an intern with the CCAT program when I started. When asked at a meeting what she would change about the world, Talia said for everyone to accept people that are different, and she also wanted to change the way the president is kicking out immigrants. Talia expanded on both of these points with personal stories; she often shares personal stories that are related to issues of justice and equity.

Tyrone is a newer member of the group. His mother has recently started working at Anderson. Tyrone is twelve years old and in 6th grade. He is African American. Tyrone has quickly become a key member of the CCAT program, and he recently came with Vienna to speak with two of the school board commissioners. He takes advantages of all of the opportunities offered him to address issues of social justice and equity that affect his life, such as school board meetings and street protests. He is often at Anderson even when there isn't anything programmed specifically.

Vienna is fourteen years old and is in 8th grade. She has been a key member of the CCAT program for a couple of years with her participation ramping up in 2019. Vienna's

mom works with the PCAT program as a parent coordinator. Vienna has an older brother and a younger brother who are both involved with Anderson. Her family is from El Salvador. Vienna often comes to Anderson after school even when there isn't anything specific programmed. She was an intern for the summer program and showed her leadership skills in a variety of ways. At the beginning of the 2019 school year, Vienna ran for ASB (school body) president at her school. She was 20 votes shy of winning. Vienna consistently shows an advanced understanding of the issues affecting her life and how they can be addressed. She has spoken at rallies at City Hall, such as the rally to close Juvenile Hall and other rallies.

Adult participants

Bonnie, the CCAT coordinator, is a visionary activist who majored in Community Studies at a University of California campus. In 2015, she carried out a six-month internship with Anderson that involved developing a program for the youngest members while their parents were in PCAT meetings. Around a year after graduating, Bonnie was hired full-time to coordinate the CCAT program. As a first-generation college student from a low-income background, Bonnie feels the need to use the different opportunities she was given to make change for the people in her family, the next generation, and the people in her community, so they can have the kind of liberation she's found. The children and youth are always telling Bonnie that she is so patient, and she takes this as a warm compliment. She feels that her patience and kindness build trust.

Yasmin attended the same UC campus that Bonnie attended, but a few years later. In the fall of 2018, Yasmin carried out a similar internship to Bonnie and worked as a

coordinator with Bonnie. In the summer of 2019, Yasmin came back to Anderson to work with the CCAT program, and she has stayed with the program ever since. Since Yasmin has been back, the school visits have been expanded; the collaboration between Bonnie and Yasmin is a critical part of the program. Yasmin brings much positive energy into the room, along with social critique. She is always enthusiastic about the activities we do and always warmly supportive of the children and youth.

Researcher's Role

I have been working with the CCAT program as a volunteer for two and a half years. During this time, I have attended weekly CCAT meetings, CCAT leadership monthly meetings, school board meetings where CCAT children were speaking, community celebrations such as a Trick or Chant on Halloween, and the annual members' retreat. This has helped me to build relationships with the children and the community at large. I didn't initially intend to use the program as the focus of my dissertation; I think this works in my favor, as I built relationships before considering data collection. I was involved with the program based on what I love about it and the fight for education justice. I would have volunteered with the program whether or not I used it as a site for dissertation research.

The role I had with the CCAT program is that of participant observer. I recorded meetings on my phone rather than writing field notes on the spot, as I couldn't take a backseat to the activities and the discussion, thus I couldn't fully step back. Erickson (1985) notes that however one does participant observation—as mostly observer or mostly participant—it is not involvement at arm's length. The researcher must really *be there*, experiencing strong relationships with whomever else is there (Erickson, 1984). The

observer's paradox (Durán & Palmer, 2014), whereby the observer inherently affects what is happening, was likely attenuated by the fact I was not there just to do research, and the children were already used to being recorded as part of regular practice in the program. I was up front about the work I am doing, and this may have affected the data collected, but I attempted to address this in my reflective writing.

Data Collection

Over a six-month period in 2019, I conducted an ethnographic case study of the CCAT program, focusing on how community organizing impacts the literacy practices of children and youth in an out-of-school-hours advocacy program. The study began at the end of June and ended in December.

In June and July, CCAT children and youth came to summer programming days that were held over three weekends for four hours each day Friday and Saturday. The days were run at the same time as summer programming for the PCAT members. The programming was the same for both days, and most people only came for one day out of the weekend. In previous years, there has been more time to put into the summer programming for a general audience; but with the Free Minds Free People conference happening in the middle of July, more time was needed to focus on preparing the workshop and travelling to Minneapolis. In August through December 2019, the children and youth met weekly for CCAT meetings and less frequently for Captains' Days. The workshop group facilitated their workshop on overpolicing at the Teachers 4 Social Justice conference in October, and this required extra planning sessions.

I collected data across various settings including weekly meetings, leadership days, and other events that arose (i.e., conference presentations and speaking at City Hall). Data collection instruments are discussed in more detail below the outline of the study.

Data collection	Data sources	Length of time	Setting/participants
June-August	a) General summer program	a) 2 days per week for 3 weeks (4-5 hrs/day)	a) Main site
	b) FMFP Conference planning	b) 3 days (2 hours)	b) Main site
	c) FMFP conference	c) 2 preparation session (1 hour each)	c) Minneapolis
	d) FMFP conference	d) Workshop facilitation (90 minutes)	d) Minneapolis
August-December	a) Weekly meetings	a) 1 day/per week for 3 months (2 hrs/day)(total 9 meetings as some meetings were cancelled)	a) Main site
	b) Teachers 4 Social Justice workshop preparation	b) 3 prep sessions over 1 week (2-3 hours each)	b) Main site
	c) Teachers 4 Social Justice workshop	c) Workshop facilitation (90 minutes)	c) SLUSD High School site

July	Interviews with three workshop participants	30-minute individual interviews with Vienna and Marta and a shorter interview with Clara	Main site
July and October	Interviews with Bonnie-program coordinator	3 interviews: 30 minutes pre-FMFP workshop: July 1st 30 mins post FMFP workshop: July 26th 30 mins post-T4SJ workshop: October 23rd	All at main site
November	Interview with two workshop participants	1x 50-minute interview with Vienna and Talia	Main site

Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments included field notes, transcriptions of audio and video recordings, transcriptions of interviews, and a researcher journal.

Field notes

Field notes are an essential part of any ethnographic study; ethnography doesn't exist without them. There is no one way to organize field notes, and each researcher finds what works best for them. I wrote up field notes before doing a transcription, so that I wasn't influenced initially by what was said; rather, I picked up on the tone of the interactions that

took place, and the dynamics in the room. I used a double-entry journal, with one column showing procedural notes and the other side my reactions and feelings. These were typed up and coded for emergent themes.

Audio and video recordings

Meetings were recorded and transcribed. Whole group conversations as well as informal conversations were recorded. The children at CCAT are accustomed to being recorded, as Bonnie uses this feedback to plan the weekly and monthly sessions. Recordings happen as part of whole group activities and also as interviews at the end of the session. I initially used video recordings, but then I moved into audio recordings only, with still images of what was happening. The workshop facilitations were recorded for future reference by one of the coordinators, but I mostly used my own audio transcription to analyze the workshop and the interactions. I was an active participant in both workshops (in Minneapolis and in San Francisco), so when we broke into groups, I didn't capture everything.

Interviews

I conducted pre, middle, and post interviews with Bonnie, the coordinator and creator of the CCAT program (July 2nd, July 26th and October 23rd); with Yasmin, the other coordinator (August 3rd); and with the participants in the program (Vienna: July 19th; Marta: July 31st; Clara: July 31st; Vienna and Talia: November 18th; Lorena: December 10th and Marta February 4th 2020). The interviews were semi-structured and included questions regarding opinions and feelings related to the organization, the CCAT program, and the focus of this study. I transcribed the interviews myself, with one exception (the final interview with

Bonnie), as much of what was recorded was multi-voiced and contextual. I used a conversational or dialogic style of interviewing (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005), which hopefully encouraged participants to share more than if it had been a more structured process. I had specific questions I wanted to ask, such as what they were proud of and what skills they take to the world outside Anderson, but we also went in other directions (see Appendices A and B).

Data Analysis

Data collection is closely aligned with data analysis in ethnographic studies, and the choices I made in regards to data collection impacted the scope of the analysis and the level of understanding I have of the participants and the context. As a budding ethnographer, I collected as much data as possible—through field notes, transcriptions and interviews as well as artifacts—not just for the study at hand, but to inform my practice in future studies. Data collection involved around 30 hours of audio and video recording of meetings, rehearsals of the workshop, facilitation of the workshop, and transcription of these meetings. I did all but one piece of the transcription myself, as most of it was multi-voiced and would have been confusing to an outside transcriber. In some instances, I selectively transcribed, but overall I tried to stay true to the action and words as they unfolded. As I wasn't doing discourse analysis, it wasn't important that everything be transcribed verbatim. I had hundreds of pages of field notes, reflections, and memos for reference to help me in this process.

Ethnography should be considered a "deliberate inquiry process" guided by a point of view, rather than a reporting process or an intuitive process that does not involve reflection (Erickson, 1985). The ethnographer, according to Erickson (1985), brings to the field a

theoretical point of view and a set of questions, explicit or implicit. The research questions I formulated are based on language and literacy practices that involve community organizing and dialogic and collaborative processes. The data I collected informed my understandings of the literacy practices in use and informed how the children use dialogic and collaborative writing/literacy practices to develop and sustain transformative political discourse and activism.

Researchers exploring language and literacy practices may focus on discursive moves and strategies, but understanding the context is vital for deep understanding and analysis. In this study, I didn't focus specifically on discursive moves; but when transcribing, I didn't "correct" oral or written expression, and I left in speech features such as "like." During the member-checking process, if a participant wanted their speech and/or comments edited, then that happened. In one instance, a participant wanted speech features such as "um" and "like" taken out, and they wanted to clarify what they'd said by adding a few words. In this case, the addition was helpful and led straight on from their previous comment. I am beholden to the participants, and this must be a document they are pleased with.

A reflective journal helped me as a thinking partner, in particular with my positionality as a White female educator in an organization for People of Color. It assisted with triangulation of data as I reviewed my journal alongside field notes, transcripts of meetings and interviews, and interview logs. Consistent across articles read for a methods survey (Murray, 2017) was a need for ongoing data analysis, to inform next moves and to sharpen focus. Initial themes, guided by research questions, can be coded during data collection to be used in interviews and informal conversations (Axelrod, 2014). This is then built on and expanded over time.

A constant comparative perspective requires of the ethnographer the ability to cut to the past and the future of the topic or area under study (Heath & Street, 2008). Manyak (2006) noted that he used methods of constant comparison on a weekly basis to code the data and create conceptual categories. Simultaneously, he identified examples that captured key themes from his conceptual analysis. Reyes and Azuara (2008) used a multiple approach analysis to the study of biliteracy within an ecological framework. In-school reading assessments and interviews took place, using tasks that were commonly used in the classroom, such as Concepts of Print and Environmental Print Analysis. Inside and outside of the classroom, field notes were taken and interviews carried out.

Erickson (1985) states that a good ethnography should be able to provide data to illustrate the decisions made during the research process, including what data was not available, and what data was inconsistent with the overall point of view presented. Durán and Palmer (2014) note that in their analysis they selected the discourse segments relevant to their research question and what was "worthy of transcription." A solo researcher would have a harder time making these decisions, but this is the type of information that is important to share. According to Erickson (1985), the ethnographer should provide readers with "guidelines for the falsification of the analysis", should a reader decide to replicate the study.

Data Analysis Procedure

I began coding the data by hand starting in July. I printed up field notes and transcripts (of meetings and of interviews) and used colored pencils to underline and code emergent themes such as *literacy for community-building* and *literacy for leadership development*. Beginning in September, I started using NVivo to code the data, as well as to

store the data in a more coherent manner. It was my first time using NVivo, and I learned much along the way. It was easier to code for objective categories such as participant names and events, as is common; as I went, I found myself adding codes that were often objective rather than truly analytical, and that didn't necessarily add to the purpose of the study.

Writing up my hunches helped me branch out into more subjective findings, which were nonetheless backed up by data, such as the importance of face-to-face peer teaching and learning. I first came up with seven hunches and then refined these to the four findings I discuss in Chapter Four. The initial hunches included "being involved with the CMAC program has led to a greater awareness of the importance of peer-to-peer teaching and learning" and "the youth have a nuanced view of leadership and their own leadership styles."

Ethical Considerations

Campano et al. (2015) assert that learning from community members' knowledge and recognizing the epistemic privilege they (the community members) benefit from is a stance they strive to uphold through their partnerships. An ethical orientation to research involving community organizations requires building in a self-reflexive component throughout every stage of the inquiry process, in order to address whether the researcher is superimposing or universalizing their own principles and interest onto others (Campano et al., 2015). Two norms referenced by Campano et al that are of particular relevance for me and this study are "equality is the starting point, not the end point" and "community members' knowledge and perspectives must be taken seriously."

Anderson's executive director and the CCAT coordinator were consulted regarding the study, and they gave informal consent before the process began. Once IRB permission

was granted, I spoke to the parents, children, and youth to inform them about the study. The process involved with the study was explained to them in English and in Spanish. The consent and assent documents were in English and in Spanish. Informed assent was collected from the children taking part in the study, and informed consent was obtained from the family members or legal guardians of the children taking part. It was also made clear that there were no material benefits to being part of the study and no repercussions for deciding not to take part in the study. Assent forms were obtained, with each person opting in.

The study required videotaping of classes and meetings, and some of these were transcribed. I will only use the data for research purposes, unless the organization wishes to use it for promotional and/or informational purposes (with attendant permissions). The practices I am examining are part of everyday practices in the CCAT space. At any time, the children can decide to opt out of the study. Member checks with all participants took place, in order not to misrepresent anybody and to get feedback on the analysis that took place (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005).

Researcher's profile

Dyson and Genishi (2005) comment that, depending on the interplay between their own interests and the grounded particularities of the site, researchers make decisions about how to angle their vision on these places. The time I have already spent with the CCAT program has helped me home in on a focus for the study that aligns with my interest in literacy development and community organizing. In this, I am aligned with Bonnie, as she also has a strong interest in literacy practices as a mode of expression and articulation. My educational experiences, however, are diametrically opposed to the educational experiences

the CCAT children are contending with, and also to the educational experiences Bonnie has experienced as an African American woman. I'm a White, female, middle-class, cisgendered, heterosexual, and home language English speaker from Australia. I saw myself in books and in the curriculum from an early age, and I was always encouraged by teachers to further my education. As a White woman working with an organization made up almost exclusively of People of Color, I must consistently consider my role within the organization and how my research fits in. I cannot take trust as a given, and I must earn it.

I come from a home where issues of social justice and equity are given a high priority. My mother worked as a social worker before retiring, and my father worked as a university history professor. My mother is fourth generation Australian, with British ancestry, and my father immigrated to Australia from Scotland with his family when he was 16 years old. I grew up in an overwhelmingly White outer suburb of Melbourne, and almost all my high school friends shared a similar ethnic background to me, with differences in class background. My father was given sabbatical leave every three years for six months for research purposes. His field was primarily French history, but he has also written books on football (in Scotland, and worldwide), so we lived overseas as a family on three occasions for sabbatical purposes, and one time as part of a job exchange that saw my father switching jobs with a professor at the University of Maine in the US. I started travelling on my own at the age of 19, and I have lived and studied in a few different countries since then, including Scotland, France, Mexico, and the US.

My travel history has undoubtedly shaped the person I am today, and I have seen international travel positively affect many White friends and family members. It is possible for White people in Australia not to consider issues of racism and settler colonialism as

integral to the country's development, especially as reflected in the Murdoch press and in politics. Indigenous history was not taught in my school, and the impression given by teachers and textbooks was that Indigenous people didn't live in areas like Melbourne; rather, they lived in the desert. There have been major changes since I was young, and I feel that much greater recognition has been given to the rights of Indigenous people, but there is still a long way to go. Within my familial and social circles, social justice is often a topic of conversation; my mother currently volunteers with the Refugee Council of Australia, and she is active in protests against the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and Indigenous people.

I went into teaching based on my interest in social justice and equity, and my commitment to public education. I got my elementary teaching certification at the age of twenty-seven after completing a Bachelor of Arts in Theater Studies at the University of Nanterre, in France. I taught as a substitute teacher in Melbourne for a year and a half before moving to New York to work as a teacher. I wasn't able to work in the public schools because of my immigration status, but I was able to work in private schools; I spent five and a half years as an early childhood teacher (2nd grade, 1st grade, and Kindergarten) in Brooklyn and Manhattan. During this time, I undertook a master's degree in Early Childhood Education with a Bilingual Extension, completing the course in the summer of 2008.

At the end of 2008, I was run over by a truck; I spent a month in intensive care, plus two months in rehab. I regained many of my faculties, but I am unable to return to the classroom. From 2013-2014 I completed a second Master's, in Language and Literacy Education, at San Francisco State University. During that time, I realized I wouldn't be able to return to work as a teacher, so I began an EdD program at the University of San Francisco in the spring of 2015. My initial goal, and one that remains current, was to work in

partnership with classroom teachers to highlight the work being done in schools and to share that with a wider world. At present I have the great fortune of working with student teachers in a supervisory role, so I am able to be in elementary classrooms without the physical and emotional stress that comes with classroom teaching.

The experiences that have led to this moment inform the role I have with the CCAT program and how I perceive myself in the space. I am an outsider to the experiences of most of the people in the organization, and listening is one of the most important tasks for me to take up. I am aware of the privileges I benefit from as a White woman, and I am frequently reminded of how I am able to move through the world with limited restrictions on life and limb. The accident is an outlier, and does not take away the safety I experience on a daily basis as a White woman—safety that is not necessarily afforded to People of Color. This is a productive tension, but I need to sharpen an analysis of my positionality as I conduct the research with the CCAT youth.

Using a variety of ethnographic tools over a six-month period provided me with data to explore the affordances of dialogic and collaborative literacies using the CCAT program as a case study. I looked closely at the extent to which the CCAT children and youth engage in literacy practices that support and extend political action and activism. The data was analyzed through a critical literacy lens to ensure a focus on relationships of language and power, as well as a focus on how the CCAT youth developed and sustained literacy practices that led to transformation and change.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

I am providing a glossary for the various acronyms and terms in this chapter.

Glossary

ACC: Anderson Community Collective

A.C.T. Now campaign: Accountability, Consistency, Transparency, Now. A campaign launched in October 2019 by Anderson Community Collective that asks for the SLUSD school board to fulfill their promises to low-income Black and Brown communities (more information on page 42)

CCAT: Children Creating and Transforming—for elementary and middle school children and youth: one of three member led programs within ACC

FMFP: Free Minds Free People

PCAT: Parents Creating and Transforming: one of three member led programs within ACC

SLPD: San Lucas Police Department

SLUSD: San Lucas Unified School District

SRO: School Resource Officer (euphemism for school police officer)

T4SJ: Teachers 4 Social Justice

The Workshop: The #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced workshop that was created and facilitated by CCAT youth to address policing in schools.

Trick or Chant for Liberation: An annual Halloween event for the community in which the children and youth chant demands in the street as they collect candy. A party is held at the same time.

YCAT: Youth Creating and Transforming: one of three member led programs within ACC

Introduction to Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of community organizing on the literacy practices of youth in an intergenerational non-profit in the Bay Area. The research foci were to examine the ways that children/youth engage in critical literacy practices and political action in an after-school community organization, and the role of community organizing on those practices with children and youth. The key findings from the study are: 1) community organizing with children and youth supports critical literacy and creative expression; 2) community organizing with children and youth supports critical literacy and facilitation skills; 3) community organizing fosters peer-to-peer teaching and learning; and 4) community organizing fosters collective leadership and civic engagement among children and youth.

In the following section, I provide a brief review of the data and events that comprised the major events in the study, as well as my role as a researcher and participant within the organization. In the subsequent sections, I provide data to support my findings.

I collected data from a series of activities, meetings, and events over a six-month period. As there are many events and acronyms we use within the youth program (CCAT), and from the various organizations referenced, I have developed a glossary for clarity with the data sources. The central focus of CCAT's work in 2019 was an interactive workshop, #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced, created to address the topic of overpolicing in schools. It was facilitated at two major education justice conferences in 2019: the *Free Minds Free People* conference in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, and the *Teachers 4 Social Justice* conference in San Francisco, California.

The creation, preparation, and facilitation of the workshop made up the bulk of the data, with other activities taking up less room. Other sources of data—as time and conditions permitted—came from a school board meeting, an annual Halloween event (Trick or Chant for Liberation), a podcast preparation, and CCAT meetings. The CCAT coordinators don't always have a full say in what happens at the meetings—for example, in August, Bonnie was hoping to focus more closely on the children being detained at the border and have that as the theme for Trick or Chant, but the launch of the A.C.T. Now campaign (outlined on page 42) meant that we focused more closely on that.

For the past seven years, I have been involved with Teachers 4 Social Justice (T4SJ) in San Francisco; for the past five years, I have been a core member. The main work T4SJ engages with is organizing the annual conference, which draws over 1000 people from around the country. The day-long conference includes keynote speakers, a wide variety of workshops, a resource fair, and opportunities to build connections with like-minded educators. The conference is free to attend, and expenses are covered through fundraising. The conference is held in October, so that educators have had time to settle in to their year, while giving them time to implement what they take away from the event.

The conference workshops all address issues of education equity and justice in and outside of formal educational spaces. An attempt is made to accept workshops with a high level of interaction and that address critical needs. Some examples from 2019 are "Investigating the Science Behind Environmental Racism and Injustice" and "Seeing the Unseen: Supporting Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Building Critical Consciousness."

The goal is to have people thinking about the issues raised in the workshops and how this impacts our lives leading to praxis. It is different from many professional development opportunities available to educators, as no one is pushing a product or a prescribed curriculum. The *Teachers 4 Social Justice* conference is open to educators across the country, but most attendees are based in the Bay Area. People come from Southern California and the Pacific Northwest, but in smaller numbers.

Through my involvement with T4SJ, I found out about the Free Minds Free People (FMFP) conference. Free Minds Free People is a biennial national conference convened by the Education for Liberation Network, which brings together teachers, young people, researchers, parents, and community-based activists/educators from across the country to build a movement to develop and promote education as a tool for liberation (from Free Minds Free People website[5]).

The FMFP conference is hosted in a different city each time, with recent conferences being held in the Twin Cities, MN (2019), Baltimore, MD (2017) and Oakland, CA (2015). It always takes place in the middle of the summer to make it easier for people to travel for the event. It is a multi-day event with many keynote speakers, workshops, and diverse social opportunities along with professional growth. The conference is low cost, and fundraising supplements the registration fees. For youth, the conference fee is $15-20; for adults, it starts at $60 and goes up to $300 based on what attendees are able to pay. No one is turned away for lack of funds.

In 2019 the FMFP conference took place in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. Near the end of 2018, I suggested we put a workshop together with the CCAT children and youth, as the

[5] https://fmfp.org/

conference supports youth voice and youth led workshops. I was away over the Christmas and New Year Holidays, and when I came back to San Francisco the group had already started planning what the workshop could look like and what the topic would be.

Prospective Free Minds Free People facilitators were asked to tie proposals to the National Student Bill of Rights[6], a living document first created by youth at the 2009 Free Minds Free People conference in Houston, TX. The CCAT youth chose the right to safe and secure public schools. This specific topic about school police links directly to one of Anderson Community Collective's main goals, which is to eliminate school policing in SLUSD[7], and it reflects concerns the youth have in regard to their own schooling.

In September of 2018 an incident at Bremen High School, a school near Anderson, brought the issue very close to home. A pellet gun went off in a student's backpack, and the school was then placed in lockdown. Police with assault weapons came into classrooms and threatened the youth. The police also took a student into custody who had nothing to do with the pellet gun going off (he had the same backpack). The police then walked this student out in front of the press and held him for hours without informing his parents. The trauma of the event lasted through the school year, as students felt that they could be taken away by the police without justification at any time.

Last year was my first time attending the FMFP conference, and what I particularly liked was the youth strand and the fact that there were sessions specifically for children and youth, organized by youth. People from the Baltimore Algebra Project (BAP) play an important role in the conference, and they helped set up events for people 24 years old and

[6] https://nationalstudentbillofrights.wordpress.com/

[7] As of June 23, 2020, the SLUSD board of education members voted to cut ties with the SFPD, following a trend throughout the country to defund the police after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd.

younger. The girls in the workshop group didn't attend any of those, as we couldn't have let them be there alone, but it sets a tone for the conference—in that adults often need to step aside and give space up for the youth and young adults. All conference sessions welcomed children and youth on paper, but Marta and Vienna were made to feel unwelcome at one of the sessions. It wasn't as easy to navigate the conference as we might have liked, and we didn't make as many connections as I might have liked. It was a highly engaging event, though, and the youth are already talking about 2021. The peer-to-peer teaching and learning they engaged with at FMFP was brought back with them, and it gave the group added confidence moving to the T4SJ facilitation.

Finding I:
Community organizing with youth supports critical literacy and creative expression

The workshop preparation and facilitation of #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced were the clearest examples of how youth organizing fostered critical literacy and creative expression. For brevity, I often refer to this event as simply *the workshop*. As mentioned in the introduction, youth co-facilitated *the workshop* at two social justice conferences—FMFP and T4SJ. There were a couple of other occasions I drew upon to demonstrate youth's critical literacy and creative expression, such as preparing for the school board meeting's public comment and planning for the annual Halloween Trick or Chant event. I chose to draw upon examples of youth voices and data from various times; these are not all in chronological order. Instead, I focused on the preparation for and facilitation of *the workshop*, and how youth engaged with the event or activity, to demonstrate the larger themes I found.

Workshop creation and development

I came back to Anderson Community Collective, after a quick trip to Australia, in the middle of January 2019. The CCAT youth had already selected the overarching topic of "Safe and Supportive Schools," with a focus on policing. Bonnie shared with me that she started talking to the group about *the workshop* facilitation being "just a bag of all the things you love doing in school" (Interview, July 26, 2019). She commented that the youth said they like art, role-playing, theater, and movement; that they didn't like a lot of slides and talking. Bonnie said the group talked about what it would look like in their *workshop*, to make it feel like people "have all the fun things that they enjoy doing and that help them learn" (Interview, July 26, 2019). This approach illustrates the collaborative nature of developing *the workshop* and that the final say always rested with the youth. It also highlights the pedagogical components of *the workshop* and that the youth included activities that help *them* learn to best in order to engage a wider audience.

The workshop was guided by a slideshow, but the focus was on oral transmission direct to the audience. It began with a check-in and community agreements, then an overview of ACC and the work the organization has done so far. Bonnie asserted that this slide was important, to show why we have the credentials to talk about this issue; it highlights ACC's role within the movement for police-free schools.

After this, a three-minute video from Vox was shown as an overview to explain the school-to-prison pipeline. Next was a turn-and-talk followed by the first interactive segment: "This or That." "This or That" is an icebreaker that asks the audience to respond to a prompt and to move to the side of the room that fits their experience. For example: *I feel safe and supported at school*. You move to the right if *this* is your experience. If, however, *this* is not

your experience, than you may have experienced *that*: *I don't feel safe and supported at school.* You move to the left if *that* is your experience. (You move to the middle if you experience both or are unsure which side to pick. I write about this activity in more detail in Finding II, which focuses on facilitation.)

The check-in, the turn-and-talk and "This or That*"* gave the audience the chance to be heard in the room and to have their experiences validated (more in Finding II). At this point, *the workshop* moved into addressing school policing in more detail. The activity the youth chose for this portion was a debate, or as they called it "The Great Debate." Instead of reading out the reasons why police think they should be in schools and the reasons why this is damaging and dangerous, the group split into two groups—the School Resource Officers (SROs) and the community organizers—and debated the issue. (I talk about The Great Debate in more detail after this synopsis of the workshop.)

Following "The Great Debate" came the "Stop Frame" activity. This activity brings all participants together to role-play events of injustice and discuss what the alternatives are. The "Stop Frames" activity is based on *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal & McBride, 2013), and it is an unscripted activity that brings body to the fore.

After the "Stop Frame" activity, the audience returned to their seats, and the next few slides outlined the root causes that make students of color feel unsafe around police: racism, underinvestment, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Talia took responsibility for the "racism" slide, Vienna took responsibility for the "underinvestment" slide, and Marta took responsibility for the "school-to-prison pipeline" slide (for reference, participant profiles are on pages 47-51). The group as a whole researched these topics, but the participants chose which they wanted to present at the conferences. In Minnesota, Clara shared a personal story

that related to the "racism" slide, but in San Francisco she chose to stay on the side. Kelly was there as general support.

The basic structure of *the workshop* stayed the same at both the FMFP and the T4SJ conferences; but at the T4SJ conference, the youth spoke more and Bonnie spoke less. This attests to the growing confidence they had in the roles they took on. The slides were edited for clarity, but the sequencing was close to the same for both events. The main difference in the formatting between the two conferences was with the "Stop Frames" activity. I write about this in more detail in Finding II.

The Great Debate

"The Great Debate" is an activity the youth chose in order to outline the reasons for and against police presence in schools. It didn't bring in audience participation and did not require facilitation as such. It drew on creative expression from the youth and is a way of sharing the points of view of the police and the community organizers in an embodied manner. The group were divided into School Resource Officers (SROs) and community organizers. Bonnie led the SROs, along with Clara and Kelly. Marta, Talia, and Vienna played the community organizers.

Marta, Talia, and Vienna have distinct ways of expressing themselves. Marta appears to bring her whole body to the activity, whereas Vienna and Talia take more of a muted stance physically. Vienna has firm and reasoned contributions to make, and Talia is more reserved on the surface—but when given the opportunity, she shows her knowledge of and commitment to the project. Clara and Kelly tend to step back a fair way, but they did support

Officer Bonnie when she called on them, for example to support her statement that SROs uphold the law.

The debate allowed for strong emotion, and this is an emotional issue—a visceral issue—so the responses to Officer Bonnie have to be firm and pointed (Researcher's journal, October 6, 2019). The community organizers (Talia, Vienna, Marta) knew their facts, and they had to hammer them home; this is a skill they'll use later, or are already using, in order to stand up for what they know is right. Practicing it here is key (Researcher's journal, October 6, 2019). The youth learned about these facts from carrying out their own research and from the adult coordinators. Three main points were made on each side. The SROs claimed that they maintain law and order, that they serve as counselors and mentors, and that they are needed in emergencies. The community organizers responded to each of these three points without advancing a unique argument, but this is the nature of the relationship between law enforcement and public schools. The police want to push in, and the community wants the police out.

The youth began working on "The Great Debate" in January 2019; over time, they strengthened their arguments for clarity and purpose. They presented it at the Annual Retreat in April 2019 before taking it to the FMFP and the T4SJ conferences. In the lead-up to *the workshop* facilitations, the group practiced their parts and discussed them. Before each iteration, the group practiced the debate in full at least twice, as well as doing run-throughs of the arguments while seated.

In rehearsal for FMFP

At a rehearsal of "The Great Debate" before the Free Minds Free People conference, Marta, as a community organizer, responded to Officer Bonnie, who said that police are needed in school because children aren't following the law.

Marta asserted:

> Students of Color are treated like criminals, and that's not fair. Do White students get treated like that? No, only Students of Color get treated like that. Even kindergartners get arrested for doing a simple thing that even a White student does, like it's not fair. It is not equal. (Marta, Free Minds Free People prep, July 9, 2019)

Here Marta lays out the problem with police in schools in general terms with a specific example. Marta commented that the more she learned about the school-to-prison pipeline, the more she felt compelled to share the information (July 2nd, 2019). She said that she couldn't believe that this was happening to students in school. After this first point, she moves into a negotiation: "If we do need you guys, we need to set an agreement of how many police are going to be at the school and how you guys are going to treat our students." Then she ends with an appeal to the SROs humanity: "Students need to be treated right, like if they're your kids. You wouldn't treat your kids like trash. You would treat them with kindness, you would treat them… they're literally the world to you" (Marta, July 9, 2019). This is a three-pronged argument with direct evidence. Marta is leveraging a powerful tool—that of humanizing youth who are often de-humanized. She forces the SRO to acknowledge how they would treat their own children in that scenario.

The final line—*treat them like they're literally the world to you*—still gives me goose bumps, as I can vividly recall Marta's heartfelt plea of treating students as immensely

valuable beings. The group took a break after this, and Marta's words hung in the air. I think we were all strongly impacted by her words and her plea not to treat Students of Color as trash but to treat them humanely.

Free Minds Free People conference

At the workshop in FMFP in Minneapolis, Marta refused to empty her pockets when Officer Bonnie asked her to; when asked why, she said "I don't want to. I mean…listen to you. All you're doing is harming us youth." Officer Bonnie countered with a story about arresting a six-year-old having a tantrum, and Marta replied with, "Well, when you were that age, I bet you ran out of class if they did that to you." Officer Bonnie couldn't dispute that point.

This is a playful scenario, and the truth is that if this were to happen in real life, the SRO wouldn't be as willing to compromise. The opportunity here for the community organizers to express themselves with anger and frustration allows them the full range of their emotions without taking away from the key points they need to convey. If this became a real-life situation, the youth would most likely be able to state their opposition to SROs in a calm and reasoned manner, as the anger here doesn't distort their arguments.

Vienna backed Marta up by stating that when schools have police, they rely on them way too much, like with kids running out of class. Vienna suggests, "Instead we can make a plan so you're there but not regularly. Also, there's no evidence that police in schools stop school shootings, period. Where is your evidence?" Marta follows with "We don't really need police at school, like the entire school day. Not a lot of things happen every single

second. If we need you at this point, we can set an agreement to have you, but not every single day" (Free Minds Free People conference, July 13th, 2019).

Vienna and Marta use negotiating tactics here, as community organizers do, to effect change. A compromise is raised. Vienna and Marta both make a case for re-examining the presence and role of police in schools. They are articulating, in their own words, a sophisticated analysis of the arguments raised on both sides.

Teachers 4 Social Justice conference

During "The Great Debate" at the T4SJ conference, Marta said, in response to the SROs claim that they are just upholding the law, "I understand that you're trying to enforce the law, but this is mean to Students of Color, and they're being targeted and treated like they're already in prison and criminalizing them, and this is starting even when they're in preschool." Marta has added to her analysis of the issue here, and she speaks about school being like prisons (she has called them prison-schools) and the criminalization of children and youth starting from such a young age. This is a succinct way of articulating the problem and demonstrates her growing understanding of what it means to "criminalize" youth—that is, treating them like they are already guilty of a crime just for existing as Black and Brown people.

To add to this point, Marta continues, "One of your own officers arrested a kindergartner for throwing a tantrum. It's just a tantrum. Kindergartners always do that. And you just have to target that one student, that one Student of Color" (Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12th, 2019).

The Great Debate has given Marta the space to work through her thoughts about school police and to develop a well-reasoned argument with some compromise. At the FMFP conference, all three community organizers (Marta, Talia, and Vienna) spoke for about the same amount of time during the debate. At the T4SJ conference Marta spoke the most during the debate; overall, it was shorter. Marta came to the conference from a soccer game, and this maybe gave her focus and energy. She didn't take away from the other participants, though, and it was still a team effort.

Stop Frames

The third mini-activity that comprised the workshop was "Stop Frames," a version of tableaux as employed in Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal & McBride, 2013). It involved a group of people making a kinesthetic still image of a situation or theme, using their bodies. At the Free Minds Free People conference, the whole group (about twenty people) performed one scenario. The scenario spoke about a group of 6- to 11-year-olds who were arrested in Tennessee for having witnessed a fight the previous day and not having done anything about it (source ACLU[8]).

The first stop frame was the fight, and the second was what you would prefer to see instead. It was difficult to do well with such a large group and with a scenario that spanned two days, but it did inspire conversation as to what should have happened in this scenario—such as six-year-olds playing tag rather than being arrested.

[8] https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/bullies-blue-problem-school-policing-infographic

Based on youth and coordinator feedback from the FMFP conference, the Stop Frame activity was altered significantly for the Teachers 4 Social Justice conference (October 12th, 2019). At the T4SJ conference, the audience was broken up into four smaller groups; four scenarios were used, all involving youth in the Bay Area. One of the scenarios was the incident that happened at Bonita High School when a pellet gun going off led to a lockdown of the high school, and another was the arrest of a six-year-old girl for kicking the teacher.

The four scenarios were decided upon by the youth, in collaboration with the coordinators and me (Field notes, October 11th, 2019). We drew from examples raised by a coalitional partner who has worked over many years to eliminate police from their district's schools. Vienna and Yasmin went to a rally where this organization presented on the work they have done and the steps needed to make schools safe for Black students—and, by extension, other Students of Color.

At the preparation session Bonnie asked the youth to write up on chart paper how they could explain what happened to the individuals in the scenarios in a simple way, so that they could hand it out to other people (the audience at T4SJ). The youth took turns writing up the chosen scenarios on chart paper. As a group, we discussed how we could express what had happened to the BOP youth and the repercussions of police involvement in their lives (Field notes, October 19th, 2019).

Bonnie made sure that youth voice was included. She said to the youth, "Somebody write this, cuz I'm putting my own words in it, and I want you all to hear your voices, cuz that makes it more understandable" (October 11, 2019).

Bonnie doesn't specify whether it would be more understandable to the youth or to the workshop audience, but it is valid in both cases. The pedagogical priority is giving voice

to the youth, so they learn more about the information they then share with a larger public in an embodied manner. The ways in which they (the youth) learn best, they put into practice during the workshop facilitation.

In Finding II, I write more about the facilitation skills the youth draw on as part of this process.

School board public comment preparation

In the fall of 2019, the San Lucas Police Department (SLPD) was scheduled to speak at a San Lucas Unified School Board (SLUSD) meeting to discuss the latest memorandum of understanding, or MOU, between the SLPD and the school district. Two of the CCAT youth whose parents work at Anderson were at the center the day before the school board meeting, and they prepared a speech to share as part of public comment on this issue. The SLPD ended up pulling out of the meeting–and they still haven't appeared at a board meeting, so this speech is yet to be shared[9]. However, I drew on it here to demonstrate the ways that youth organizing at CCAT nurtured critical literacy and creative expression via a collaborative text on policing in schools with the purpose of being shared publicly. The speech was written without spaces between Tyrone and Vienna's contributions but for clarity I have separated them below:

> [Tyrone] Hi my name is Tyrone. I am 12 years old. I am a part of Children Creating and Transforming at Anderson Community Collective.

[9] See footnote 3

> [Vienna] Hi my name is Vienna I am 13 years old and I'm a CCAT intern at Anderson Community Collective. We are here speaking up today because of experiences that have happened to us inside our schools and also to other students.
>
> [Tyrone] Us Students of Color get treated differently than White students. One thing that I noticed was when a White person and a Black person got into it they would just go off of what the White person said and the Black student got punished.
>
> [Vienna] Did you know 57% of people getting sent out of class are Black students for small nonviolent stuff that they shouldn't be sent out of class for like disruption or defiance?
>
> [Tyrone] In SLUSD, Black students are 6 times more likely to be suspended than White students. Sometimes students feel like they're in prison in school.
>
> [Vienna] Schools need to be teaching us with relevant stuff towards our future instead of teaching like prep school for prison. That's the term Angela Davis used to describe our schools.
>
> [Tyrone] My dream school would be caring and positive and loving. Thank you for listening**.**
>
> (Shared Google Doc, October 21, 2019)

In this piece, we see awareness of audience as Vienna and Tyrone introduce themselves and as they finish the piece with thanking the audience for listening. They begin from a place of personal connection, then back this up with facts that support their experiences. The youth used information from a brochure to gather statistics and wrote the other parts in their own words. Bonnie and I were sitting next to the youth, and we helped by pointing out and explaining some of the facts and figures, but the phrasing was all theirs. Vienna brought in

Angela Davis, as a quote of hers had been used during the workshop for the school-to-prison pipeline slide regarding schools as “prep schools for prison” (A. Y. Davis, 2003, p. 39) and Tyrone referenced incidents at his school where there are unfair discipline practices (Field notes, October 28, 2019).

The literacy skills Tyrone and Vienna were engaged with were synthesizing information and selecting data to support their assertions. Bonnie pointed out that the mistreatment of Black and Brown students is due to racism, and Tyrone hadn’t been explicitly aware of that before. Tyrone is relatively new to CMAC, and as meetings haven’t focused explicitly on racism in recent times, he mightn’t have been part of conversations about race and racism. I missed an opportunity to ask him how it felt to learn that racism was behind the mistreatment of Black and Brown children.

(On Juneteenth 2020, both Tyrone and Vienna spoke in front of a large crowd for #BlackLivesMatter and for Police-Free Schools. Vienna was interviewed by NBC Bay Area, and both Bonnie and Vienna’s interviews were shown on the nightly news. Five days later, the SLUSD board voted to cut ties with the SFPD.)

Trick or Chant for Liberation

“Trick or Chant” is an annual Halloween event at CCAT that I also drew upon to illustrate youth’s critical literacy and creative expression. Halloween is a special time at Anderson, and this year the second “Trick or Chant: Trick and treat for liberation” took place. This was an intergenerational and community event, with the youngest participant only a few months old, along with grandparents and other family members.

For this event, a party is held at the main site, then the children and youth walk up and down the block in costume and chant out demands, for example "We are goblins, we are ghouls, we want justice for our schools!" Initially the march was going to have a specific theme, but with the launch of the organization's current campaign to hold the school district to account (the A.C.T. Now campaign, as outlined on pg. 42), the chants needed to reflect the campaign instead of focusing on the children being detained at the border, as Bonnie was hoping to do.

At a weekly meeting on August 27th, 2019, Bonnie (re)introduced the Trick or Chant to CCAT children and youth by explaining that marching is important—especially to bring awareness of what's going on—but we also need to do research and educate the rest of the community about the topics. Bonnie affirmed that the children and youth need to be able to bring visibility to a topic and make it more known, so that they can help make some change (Field Notes, August 27, 2019). Bonnie told the children and youth to choose something they wanted to learn more about and something they wanted to teach people about, telling them that it should be "a project you can present to your community" (August 27, 2019).

Some of the ideas the children had were: making slime as tactile art to help with mental health for children and adults, helping the Brazilian Amazon with its fires, and having a lemonade stand to raise money to help the migrant children in cages (Field notes, August 27th, 2019). The latter two examples were inspired by what had been shown in a PowerPoint during the meeting, but the first one had not been raised earlier and came directly from one of the children. Through dialogue, the different issues that were raised were discussed, both in terms of content and then what could be done to address them. Bonnie didn't specifically mention peer-to-peer teaching in relation to Trick or Chant, but she did talk about

researching a project you can present to your community in a way that would engage them (Field notes, August 27th, 2019).

Community organizing involves pulling on the strengths of people involved in the fight and supporting all learning styles. When it comes to the children and the youth in the CCAT program, a community-organizing model supports their varying literacy skills with value placed on all their contributions. Within the CCAT setting, children and youth feel confident in taking risks, and they know that they are supported in their efforts. Bonnie said that the youth were the most passionate when they got to do things like collaborative performing and collaboratively figuring out how they would "artistically express what this meant, for them in their lives" (Interview, July 26, 2019). The creation and development of *the workshop* led to greater responsibility and commitment on the part of the youth, as they moved through the different stages and refined the content and format.

Finding II: Community organizing with children and youth supports critical literacy and facilitation skills

The second finding from my study was that community organizing supports youth facilitation skills. Throughout the various meetings, literacy acts, organizing spaces, and events at (and beyond) Anderson Community Collective, youth demonstrated and were apprenticed into facilitation competencies. I drew upon the various spaces where we practiced and implemented the #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced Workshop.

As a reminder, the 90-minute workshop presented at FMFP and T4SJ was made up of three unscripted dramatic activities (This or That, The Great Debate, and Stop Frames), as well as slide presentations and a short video with a turn and talk. Audience participation was

scaffolded in the workshop, moving from voluntary participation in "This or That" to full group participation in "Stop Frames."

In the lead-up to presenting the #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced workshop in Minneapolis, we talked about a favorite facilitator or teacher and why we liked that person's facilitation style (Field notes, July 2nd, 2019). The girls mentioned people who are supportive and patient and who adapt their teaching and facilitation to support children and youth. They pointed out people who put the needs of the children and youth first. Marta mentioned her soccer coach, who was "encouraging and also fun." Vienna referenced her 7th grade ELA teacher, who asked students to analyze work and highlighted youth voice. Clara said her 5th grade teacher, who was patient and helped her with math. Talia said that Bonnie was her favorite facilitator, because she makes everything seem easy and she has so much patience. Bonnie mentioned a teacher who challenged points of view with respect and love. I mentioned a teacher at my university who facilitates classes that engage student voice while providing necessary content knowledge. These conversations helped students develop a language for key criteria in growing their facilitating skills.

Youth Summit

The #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced workshop was facilitated for the first time in February 2019, at a Youth Summit for San Lucas Unified School District middle and high school students. It brought out leadership qualities in the youth, and they worked well together as a collective. Internal feedback following this workshop was that there were too many slides and too much talking on the part of the facilitators (Researcher's journal, February 14th, 2019). The participants at the Youth Summit workshop were all in high

school, and there were varying levels of interactive participation. We were given about two hours for the workshop, which was too long a time period. There was a break in the middle of the workshop, and not all the participants came back.

During the break, Lorena and Vienna translated some of the directions for the group activity and the documents into Spanish for the emergent bilingual students, without being prompted (Researcher's journal, February 14, 2019). This was an unexpected facilitation move, and one that highlighted Lorena and Vienna's view of themselves as teachers who put learners first. It was also a way they leveraged their language and cultural competencies. Later, Lorena said that it was really fun to help make a big impact on other people with what they were going to be doing (Interview, December 11th, 2019).

Annual retreat

At the annual Anderson Community Collective Members' Retreat in April, the group shared a revised version of *the workshop* in a reduced time frame (60 minutes instead of 90). The group looked quite polished, and I was proud of the work they did (Researcher's journal, April 1st, 2019). Not all of their hard work showed up; there was a need to practice interacting with the audience more and to have rehearsals where the audience brings up something unexpected. In this case, two of the parents stood up in favor of police being in schools. A productive conversation ensued, and the parents were able to share their points of view regarding wanting police in their children's school. Their reasons were accepted by the group, but with a critical eye. The problems of having police in schools were explained, and for the time both points of view were held in the air as the group moved on to the next activities. The youth needed to know how to respond, how to affirm and extend the verbal

response, while cementing their expertise on the topic (Researcher's journal, April 1st, 2019). This is a skill the children and youth continue to practice, and they are growing as they continue to engage in dialogic opportunities with multiple audiences.

This or That

One of the most popular activities the children and youth take part in is "This or That," one of the mini-activities within the workshop. They are always enthusiastic about facilitating it, and it was one of the first activities they brought into the workshop (Researcher journal, November 4th, 2019). The purpose of "This or That" is to get people's voices in the space, and this gives audience participants a chance to think about their experiences, whether they share them aloud or not. "This or That" involves two statements on a slide; you go to one side if *this* is your experience, or you go to the opposing side if *that* is your experience. Sample statements may be "I feel safe and supported in school" or "I don't feel safe or supported in school." There is an option of standing in the middle if your experience is a mix of both. Once people have moved to their places, the CCAT youth ask the participants why they are on a particular side and respond to what the participants say.

The questions used for "This or That" were geared towards a young student audience, but they were relevant to older participants, too. In Minneapolis, the participants were adults as well as youth, whereas in San Francisco the participants were all adults, with a mix of students and teachers.

In Minneapolis, a White teacher from the Midwest who was at the conference with a group of Latinx high school youth shared that, at her university, the White students made her very uncomfortable when she brought in multicultural art, asserting that she was a racist; she

experienced physical intimidation. In this case Marta responded to say how sorry she was to hear that (Free Minds Free People workshop, July 13, 2019). In response to the slide about whether you feel people are treated equally at your school, a Black youth from the Northeast said that he was expelled in preschool and they said he had a mental disorder. His experience was supported by an adult participant who said that, in her school setting, she is dismayed by the negative/racist language people use to talk about children of Color, even as young as five years old.

Also in Minneapolis, a group of Latinx youth from the Midwest said that they had police at their school, but they got along with them and didn't mind having them there. They said that the School Resource Officer in their school palled around with them. "This or That" isn't a place for opposition, as you don't want to deny anyone their experience. None of the other participants shared that school police made them feel uncomfortable, so Bonnie shared with respect that seeing police can be a trigger for many people who have seen the damage police have done to their community. She then turned to Marta, and Marta shared a story from one of the keynote speakers at the opening plenary that had particularly struck her. The panelist had shared that he went to a prison to do a writing workshop; he then went to a school, and it resembled a prison, with all students having to walk in a line with their hands behind their backs. (Field notes, Free Minds Free People conference, July 13, 2019). "This or That" is an opportunity to get people's knowledge and experiences in the room before the CCAT group share their research. This is a powerful facilitation move involving dialogue and active listening (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019).

At the Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, one of the participants shared that she didn't feel safe at her university, and that Black student voice is being overpoliced. Vienna

asked, “Do you think the school tries to make it like, tries to make like opportunities for Students of Color, but then they don’t make it as diverse?” (Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019). This is a complex question and shows Vienna’s keen insight into how systems work to oppress children and youth of Color. The participant responded by saying that she believes it’s done purposefully, and Vienna then thanked her for her sharing. Participant feedback after *the workshop* affirmed that the youth encouraged people to share different points of view (written feedback from T4SJ workshop participants).

After some of the adult participants shared at the T4SJ conference, the questions were turned back on the CCAT youth. Marta and Vienna shared personal stories of times they had been discriminated against by their teachers, and the audience was verbally supportive of what they said (Field notes, October 12, 2019). Next, a participant shared that, at their site, the White students were coddled and the Students of Color were not; then Marta shared that she is often targeted when she’s late, and Vienna had a similar story of discrimination (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019).

Participant feedback included that a strength of *the workshop* was hearing student perspective and discussion, and that the youth shared insight into their student experiences that put situations in their perspectives. To build from this, there was also feedback that one strength was that *the workshop* was facilitated primarily by youth and that hearing directly from them about their experiences with discipline in school was so important. It was important to be able to hear the direct impact of unjust disciplinary practices on them.

The Great Debate

"The Great Debate" is a way of embodying the points of view of the police and the community organizers. Instead of using slides, the group chose to act out, in a debate format, the talking points used to justify SROs. On one side are the community organizers, and on the other side are the school police. The debate is scripted in terms of key points to cover regarding police in schools, but there is improvisation in the delivery of these points. The main points are on a slide while the debate is taking place, to help clarify the position statements for the audience.

"The Great Debate" is embodied by the CCAT youth while the audience look on. At this stage, all participants have had a chance to interact, so a level of comfort has been attained. Among the interactive activities, "The Great Debate" is the one that involved in-depth rehearsals. The questions for "This or That" had been practiced with potential responses, but until the presentation we didn't know what the audience would share (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019).

The debate doesn't require audience interaction or facilitation with unknown content such as with "This or That." The youth questioned including it at the T4SJ conference. While I thought it went well in Minneapolis, the youth thought it was a bit silly. We discussed how else we could share that information, so we came back to the debate and it stayed in for T4SJ (Field notes, October 4th, 2019).

Talia: Can we not do the debate?

[general agreement]

Bonnie: Okay, somebody cross out the debate. All right, so the purpose of the Great Debate was to have people see what both sides of it are. So we want people to understand

what SROs think, what they think they do in schools, or what they claim to do in schools, versus do we even need that? So that way, cuz there's a lot of people in—

Vienna: Can we just do it then?

Bonnie: Yeah but how can we do it, cuz by this point they've been listening a lot.

Vienna: Can we make it funny though? If we do the debate?

Bonnie: I can be the funny police officer. I just need y'all to bring the heat. Okay, let's practice it right now.

(October 4th, 2019)

Bonnie scaffolded this interaction, building from what the youth brought with them. She didn't say they had to do the debate, but she did say they needed to share the information in some form or another. The group doesn't usually like learning just from slides, so they shifted back into presenting the information in the debate format. Having the space to express their thoughts without pushback led to the group being able to embrace the debate as an active way of learning. They came to it with new purpose. This is practice for them in speaking up for their rights and the need to educate others about work they have been researching (Field notes, October 4th, 2019).

Stop Frames

The "Stop Frame" activity at the T4SJ conference led to creative interpretation of the scenarios, including each group choosing what part to make the "stop frame." It also led to a generative whole group discussion regarding alternatives that personnel could have employed instead of involving police in the punishment of the children and youth (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019). Groups were also asked to think

about the emotions the scenarios brought up and about solutions to the problem of school police (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019).

Each group had a CCAT person with them to help facilitate. Vienna came over to the group I'd joined, and she helped facilitate the activity both within a small group and with the larger group. The small group I worked with had a scenario about the lockdown at the local high school. This scenario is personal to the organization, as some of the older youth members attended the school and were caught up in the incident. Vienna is a strong and confident leader and skillfully led the discussion (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice workshop, October 12, 2019).

"Stop Frames" has the audience/participants playing a key role: they are involved in creating a critical literacy text. The text they make with their bodies represents a site of oppression, and it leads to a discussion of what can be done to heal the hurt instead of adding to it. What are the alternatives?

Vienna frequently asks questions such as "how could this have happened differently?" She is often looking to talk about alternatives in these situations, and this was an opportunity to do so with people she didn't know beforehand (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019). Theatre of the Oppressed activities involve acting out how you would approach a situation, what you would do differently, what you would say, and the effect it might have on someone; for these reasons, the Great Debate and the Stop Frames are important parts of the workshop (Researcher's journal, October 7, 2019).

Teachers 4 Social Justice conference (T4SJ)

In October, the group took *the workshop* to the Teachers 4 Social Justice conference in San Francisco. The youth took on greater responsibility in this iteration than in the Minneapolis FMFP conference, and they engaged directly with the audience in a way they hadn't before (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019). Bonnie commented that the difference in San Francisco was that they probably felt a little bit more confident, and they were able to embody what it really means to oppose (in The Great Debate). She also said that the youth brought some attitude, and they actually had confidence in what they were saying, and that that just speaks to how they've been affirming each other as time has gone on (Interview, October 23, 2019).

A strength of *the workshop* was the CCAT facilitation and the opening up of participant voice. This was the first time they presented to such a large group—around 30 people (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice conference, October 12, 2019). Before *the workshop*, Bonnie made sure that the whole group knew the facts about SROs (School Resource Officers) and overpolicing in schools, in case they were asked questions about it, but the youth didn't want to read straight from the slides. The youth wanted to express themselves in words that made sense to them (Field notes, October 11, 2019).

Participants in the T4SJ *workshop* gave written feedback that the student leaders were energetic and engaging, and also that the students were invested and passionate about their presentations. Participants also said that they were inspired by activist youth. A couple of the participants wrote that they would have liked a panel with the youth representatives. One of the feedback forms said that the pace was a bit slow, and a couple of others said they would have liked more time spent on solutions.

The feedback was very positive overall, with comments such as “The youth facilitators were amazing!” and “Y’all are the change our world/community needs. Keep strong and beautiful.” A final comment was that more of the work from Coleman Advocates would improve the conference. This feedback highlights the work the youth put into developing *the workshop*, as well as attention paid to facilitation. It is a testament to their love and conviction.

Finding III:
Community organizing fosters peer-to-peer teaching and learning

One of the affordances of *the workshop* process was that it spurred the children and youth to engage in peer-to-peer teaching and learning. This wasn’t an explicit goal of the program, and it wasn’t something I was expecting to see. When I thought of an audience for their work, I thought of the people who might be interacting with them online. I thought of digital worlds, as I thought that’s how youth best like to interact. It doesn’t come naturally to me, and so I saw this as pushing myself out of my comfort zone and being accepting of writing not looking like it did when I was in school. I did think that peer feedback would happen, but I wasn’t expecting the in-person pedagogical strengths they bring to the work. I’m not as familiar with middle school-aged youth, having worked mostly in elementary and early childhood settings.

Peer-to-peer learning and teaching potentially challenges power structures, as the children and youth digest information to share with others their age in spaces and on topics that aren’t necessarily sanctioned by adults, such as challenging the decisions made by people in administrative places of power. The example of addressing police in schools is also one that adults might shy away from. When you talk about police in schools, you are

immediately talking about violence towards children and youth. You are also talking about the criminalization of children and youth. Another topic that came up in peer-to-peer interactions is the relationship between poverty and power (Field notes, October 1st, 2019). The CCAT space, and the Anderson space writ large, challenges hegemonic practices; conversations about race, power, and privilege are the lifeblood of the organization.

Peer-to-peer learning with Simon Says

For community organizing to be most effective, people work together to gather information and share generously in honor of a collective goal. Bonnie commented that, after the Youth Summit in February 2019, *the workshop* group realized that they had put together a skeleton of all the things they wanted to have happen in *the workshop*, but they hadn't really had a chance to dive in and find facts for themselves. The group then researched topics together and paired this with searching for poetry and spoken word about the school-to-prison pipeline (Bonnie, Interview, July 26, 2019).

Talia and Vienna came across a spoken word piece that creatively expressed how they feel about the school-to-prison pipeline ("Simon Says" A. Davis & Oompa, 2016). In the spoken word piece, the two artists move between single utterances and combined utterances, which is something Talia and Vienna paid attention to as they wrote down the lyrics and practiced capturing the emotion in the piece. They shared it with both the adults and the children at the member retreat campfire, along with people sharing scary stories. In "Simon Says," the game of Simon Says devolves from an elementary classroom into a jail cell and then a casket—a real-life horror story (Researcher's journal, April 1st, 2019).

Bonnie noted that getting them to practice the piece together, and to memorize and perform it for their community, was a big part of their learning process; afterwards, they walked into *the workshop* facilitation (at each location) and did it with purpose, and they always referred back to that poem: "in 'Simon Says,' you know" (Bonnie, Interview, July 26, 2019). It also gave the two girls the chance to get to know each other better and to take on this piece without any adult prompting or expectations.

Peer-to-peer collaboration

In response to being asked how working as a collaborative helped with creating *the workshop*, Vienna said that they had stations; one would be researching, one would be writing, one would be fixing the slideshow, and one would be checking facts and stuff like that. She said that made it easier, and then if someone was struggling with research or finding stuff, they would all help each other. She added that it just made the process faster, and then that way they didn't have to practice it that much, since they were already learning those parts (Vienna, Interview, July 19, 2019).

The collaborative process described by Vienna involves genuine teamwork and support for each other. It resembles true differentiated learning, as no one person is left to feel their contribution is lacking. A key component of community organizing is drawing on the diverse skills, talents, and energetic capabilities of members and the public. Vienna mentions learning the parts *of the workshop*, thus stressing the importance of practicing what you are going to say before presenting the relevant information and supporting each other in the process (Interview log, July 19th, 2019). Talia commented at a later date, "We could also like, for example we all were there when we were practicing our parts, some parts where

people got a bit mixed up, we would all help each other" (Talia, Transcript, Captain's Day, November 18, 2019).

Peer-to-peer learning through the workshop

Going to the Free Minds Free People (FMFP) conference in Minneapolis was highly motivating for the youth, and it affirmed the importance of the topic of school policing, which they had been researching in the months leading up to the conference (Researcher's journal July 18, 2019). In July, the youth facilitated the *#OEWNBP* workshop in Minneapolis. For many of them, it was their first time out of the state, and for some it was their first time on an airplane. Marta, Vienna, and Talia all shared that they were looking forward to meeting and connecting with new people (Field notes, July 1, 2019).

Bonnie commented that working together towards a common goal and seeing them and their work be admired by other groups from around this country (at the FMFP conference**),** really sparked a different level in their facilitation skills. She said that since they'd been back (from Minnesota), they'd been so ready and willing to do more work on the topic (Bonnie, Interview July 26, 2019). Bonnie also shared that she was proud that the group went to FMFP, and she highlighted that it took a lot of work from them and that they worked so long on it (Bonnie, Interview July 26, 2019).

Bonnie shares:

> Then also, I think maybe three different times, we asked them, why are we doing this workshop. Each time, it's evolved into something where they find deeper meaning. Especially as time has gone on, some of them have had different experiences with what policing looks like in their school and also going along and building knowledge

> and awareness about how it shows up in school. They've been able to spot it clearly and dig deeper into the purpose of educating the community, bringing more awareness and learning with communities that they do workshop with.
>
> (Bonnie, Interview, October 23, 2019)

This statement from Bonnie reflects the facilitation skills the youth employed at the T4SJ conference, and she acknowledges the ongoing motivation for them as they attempt to make their schools a safe place for all. In preparation for going to Minneapolis, Marta wrote:

> This [going to the conference in MPLS] is important because we need people from out of the Bay Area to know what's happening in the Bay and other places in the US. I'm going to this trip to get away a little and also to inform people about how police are treating Students of Color and that school policing has to stop. (Marta, Transcript, July 1, 2019)

Marta asserts the importance of sharing information she has learned, with the goal of stopping overpolicing in schools. After the workshop at Free Minds Free People Marta shares:

> We, our hard work paid off and I felt good about it because there were other kids there, other teenagers there that listened to our stuff and supported us during it and for us coming from San Francisco all the way over there it's just spreading out the word about all these police in schools. (Marta, Interview, July 31, 2019)

Marta acknowledges the effort the group has made to get to this point and the connections that were made. *The workshop* involves face-to-face communication and elicitation of responses from the audience/participants. Their commitment is clear through their participation, and all five youth who went to Minneapolis were at the Teachers 4 Social

Justice conference, despite two of them having a football match earlier that day and one coming from just outside the East Bay. The composing process they were involved with strengthened their beliefs, and rehearsing *the workshop* ensured that the format was engaging to the CCAT youth and thus engaging to youth on a larger scale (Field notes, Teachers 4 Social Justice workshop October 12, 2019).

At twelve years old (eleven when the workshops were facilitated), Talia is one of the youngest members of the group; after the Free Minds Free People conference, she commented that she had felt nervous (Field notes, Free Minds Free People conference, July 13, 2019). Her nerves didn't come across during *the workshop*, and she facilitated an important group discussion beginning with the following

> So we just talked about some root causes and gotten to the bottom of why Students of Color don't feel safe around school police Now we have to figure out what we can replace school police with and what are some solutions. How do you make schools safe without police? Now you guys can share with a partner what are some solutions for this issue. [People talk to partner.] Does anyone want to share what they talked about with their partner? (Talia, Free Minds Free People workshop, July 13, 2019).

Some of the responses were that it stems from the top down, so admin has to be on board; it was also mentioned that we need to bring in the community to help (Field notes, Free Minds Free People conference, July 13, 2019).

At a monthly Leadership Day, Talia commented that she was proud that they had helped people with *the workshop* (November 18, 2019). At a Youth Advocacy Day at San Francisco City Hall (April 25th, 2019), Talia shared with a large group that her cat was

someone who inspires her, as she keeps trying if she doesn't get where she wants to go the first time. This sums up Talia's approach to the work and the role it plays in her life.

Peer-to-peer learning: Youth as classroom teachers

In April 2019, Dr. Bettina Love spoke at the University of San Francisco to accompany her seminal work "We Want to Do More Than Survive" (Love, 2019). Lorena and Vienna came with Bonnie and me to hear from Dr. Love, and one of the Anderson families came, too, with their three boys. Lorena and Vienna are able to take part in almost all CCAT events and activities, and both their parents work with Anderson. Lorena wasn't able to be part of *the workshop* at the Free Minds Free People conference, as she went to Mexico for the summer, but she was integral to *the workshop* development. The boys in the family who came to USF were unable to be part of *the workshop*, as they were working during the summer, but they have all spoken up at SLUSD school board meetings during public comment. The parents are both involved with Anderson activities as much as possible. Being present at this talk was a highlight of the year.

Before going to the talk, we met at Anderson's main building to do some personal writing about what we would like to see in our schools. We had copies of Dr. Love's book to preview, and we talked about some of the issues raised, before making our way to USF. During Dr. Love's presentation Lorena whispered to Bonnie, "That's what we do at CCAT," in reference to what Dr. Love was saying about abolitionist teaching. Abolitionist teaching asks us to imagine a world where all children thrive and where radical love is present. It is about imagining and acting upon a promise to "dark" (Love, 2019) children and youth that their lives matter and that their freedom matters.

During question time, both Lorena and Vienna asked a question that engendered a detailed answer. One of them asked Dr. Love what made her fight for education justice and the other asked why she wrote the book (Love, 2019) and whether she had any doubts in the process. Asking these questions in front of hundreds of people takes a lot of courage, and it shows how invested both Lorena and Vienna are in the fight for education justice (Reflections, April 9th, 2019). The girls were able to talk to Dr. Love after the event, have their books signed, and have a photo taken with her. Dr. Love mentioned how impressed she was with them, and this was a powerful moment for all of us.

At this event, Vienna ran into her English teacher. This then led to Vienna helping him teach a lesson on abolitionist teaching. When asked what she was proud of, in a July interview, Vienna responded:

> My English teacher, well my previous English teacher, asked me to help him teach a lesson about abolitionist teaching in class. That was something I was really proud of because like, it's a hard topic to explain and I still don't fully have the definition, so just like just having a thirteen-year-old explain to other thirteen-year-olds, it's like something I'm proud of too. (Vienna, Interview, July 19, 2019)

Vienna affirms the importance of peer-to-peer teaching and learning together in person, and she acknowledges the complexity and the challenges of discussing abolition and abolitionist teaching. Yasmin (Interview, August 3, 2019) commented that, when going into schools, the students would likely be more engaged if the class were taught by a fellow student. "I'm sure if it [political education] was coming from another student, they would have been more compelled to actually keep it in their mind, actually be engaged" (Yasmin, Interview, August 3, 2019). The CCAT coordinators are in their early 20s and are both Educators of Color, but

Vienna's comments show how important youth teaching youth is. If the youth are the ones choosing the topic, there is greater likelihood that the topic will be relevant to their lives and/or that it is taught in a manner fitting how they like to learn. Vienna often talks about how important it is to her that what she is learning in school is relevant to her life and the lives of others around her (Researcher's journal, August 27, 2019).

Peer-to-peer teaching outside of Anderson Community Center

The two oldest people in the CCAT program, Vienna and Marta, each had examples of peer-to-peer teaching and learning that happened in their schools. Vienna said she discusses solutions to problems regarding SROs with her peers, and Marta talked to her friends about an issue Anderson was helping her and her family with. With Vienna, the process of discussing and researching the impact of School Resource Officers helped frame her interactions with friends at school.

> Everything [issues discussed at CCAT] is relevant to school, but things that a thirteen-year-old that doesn't come to CCAT would want to be interested in, it won't be MOUs [Memorandum of Understanding between the school district and city police department] but it would be let's say the topic of SROs [school resource officers] in school. I take that and tell my friends a little bit about these cases that have been going on around the state, around the country, and we talk about solutions to these things, so that's one thing I take with me and I try to teach other people. (Vienna, Interview, July 19, 2019)

Vienna's comments illustrate how important Anderson is in her life and how it impacts on her socializing at school. She sees herself in the role of a teacher, and she's a

teacher who asks for input and is genuinely curious about what solutions her peers come up with. She is engaging as a critical pedagogue.

Marta said that what she takes with her from CCAT into the world is speaking with her friends about issues with relevance to her life. One example is the issue that brought her and her family to Anderson, that of addressing the lack of a bilingual teacher at a local school, along with concerns about the principal of that school. Marta said that she shared this with her whole social studies class, so everyone knew what was going on there (Marta, Interview, July 31, 2019). She said that then all the kids who were in her social studies class knew about it, and she says, "Since those kids live near this area and they know the school, too, they knew about what was happening, and it kind of spread it out through like the school [Marta's middle school]" (Marta, Interview, July 31 2019). Marta said that her friends were surprised about what was happening at this school, and they were also surprised about the role Anderson played in addressing the issue (Marta, Interview, July 31, 2019). Marta said that her friends told their parents, and then they were also trying to help out during that process.

Up to the creation of CCAT, Anderson didn't have a program that catered to middle school youth, as the YCAT (Youth Creating and Transforming) program worked with high school students. I've been surprised at how many people in the community aren't aware of Anderson and the work that is being done, but I happily share the word. Much of the work they engage in is coalitional in nature, so they are there along with other justice-oriented non-profits. Another issue is that the name doesn't say what they do straight out of the gate, and the name Anderson doesn't have contemporary significance.

Peer-to-peer teaching and learning: Podcasts

I originally thought that the workshop group would post writing online about the workshop process and journey and receive feedback on it, along with invitations to advance the conversation online. I didn't think of podcasts, but Vienna was keen on making some, as she enjoys listening to them. In the FMFP conference prep session, Bonnie talked about podcasts being like a conversation, and I wrote that this shows the importance of youth voice and that they have something to add to the conversation (Field notes, July 1st, 2019).

At the end of January 2020, the youth took up podcasting again, and they had one whole-group session (six youth, ages 12-15) and one session where Tyrone and Vienna recorded some segments on their own. At the meeting in October 2019, Vienna talked about the podcast that she made over the summer about the Bremen High School lockdown incident, and then an excerpt of the podcast was played. Vienna put a lot of thought into the podcast and prepared insightful questions ahead of time for the people she interviewed from Bremen High School. The other children and youth at the meeting listened attentively and had questions for her. They were more engaged in listening to Vienna's segment than they were in listening to a couple of other podcasts that had child and youth presenters. They were then inspired by this example to start brainstorming ideas for future podcasts (Field notes, October 1st, 2019).

The group brainstormed questions they wanted to ask each other at the meeting. The list had school discipline, books, music, creativity, money, and life issues. "Life issues" was agreed upon, especially as the other topics can fold into it (Field notes, October 1st, 2019). The youth asked each other questions relating to why poverty exists in the US and why society is messed up. Vienna replied in this way:

> I think poverty is such an issue in the United States, should I introduce myself? My name is Vienna, also from Anderson Advocates, and I think poverty is such an issue in the United States because of the way like you know like the United States was built or like formed, like how the government was formed, like how one race had more power than another race and I think it was just built on that. (Transcript, October 1st, 2019)

When given the chance to revise her words during a second take Vienna said the following:

> My name is Vienna. I'm also a CCAT leader at Anderson Advocates, and I think poverty is such an issue in the United States because of the way the government was built and like how like apparently one race is better than one another so it was just based on that, so if you're, it's accepted that if you're not this race you don't get as much money. If you're this race you get this much money. I think it's based off that. And it's what people believe and what we're trying to fight against, because it's just not fair. (Vienna, October 1st, 2019)

In this Vienna is speaking to Talia (who is interviewing her), but she is also aware of a larger audience and the work she and others do with Anderson, thus stressing "What we're trying to fight against." Vienna's first set of comments relate poverty to power differentials, and in the second example she ties poverty directly to financial inequities. Both reasons are accurate. In these examples, Vienna revises what she said and adds to it. Her motivation is likely to educate her peers, and also to help her clarify her own thoughts. Bonnie commented that Vienna has a beautiful capacity to imagine this world in such a better condition, and she wants to learn more about the history of this world to strengthen her imagination (Bonnie, Interview, July 26, 2019).

This session was practice for future podcasting, which began in January of 2020. The day before this meeting, Tyrone and Vienna wrote up ideas they had for a podcast series (Field notes, January 27, 2020). A major topic of concern for Tyrone and Vienna is that their schools are like prisons. This is something they addressed in the draft of the speech they were hoping to share at the school board meeting. They also had ideas about interviewing people about how they became activists. When the group was together, they sat around a table and talked about issues that are important to them. This included being unfairly targeted by school administration for things they hadn't done (false accusations of theft (Tyrone) and cyberbullying (Vienna)).

The literacy practices the youth engage in through peer-to-peer connections involve analysis and synthesis of personally relevant issues connected to a desire to connect with people inside and outside of the Anderson community. In Vienna's case, she talked with her friends about ways to make change; Marta talked about a way in which the Anderson community helped her and her family. When peer-to-peer teaching is encouraged in a space such as Anderson, it is an act of love and compassion. Before leaving for Minneapolis, Bonnie said to the group that it was up to them "as people who care about other people" to teach others about this issue, so they can go back into their communities and create change. Bonnie went on to say that often kids know the stuff is happening, but they don't have anywhere to learn about it and talk about it, and that's what CCAT is doing for other kids at Free Minds Free People (Bonnie, July 9, 2019). This is a central tenet of CCAT's work, and it is something that sets them up in the world of education justice and equity.

When this work is done in a dialogic and collaborative manner the experience resembles a community-organizing model, where no one person takes center stage. The

nature of learning about something you want to know more about and then teaching someone what you have learned helps ingrain knowledge and interest. The children and youth engaged in peer-to-peer teaching and learning when preparing and facilitating the workshop, as teachers within the classroom, when connecting with peers outside of Anderson, and when practicing for a podcast.

Finding IV:

Community organizing fosters collective leadership and civic engagement among youth

Anderson Community Collective is a member-led advocacy organization that promotes the leadership of low-income Black and Brown communities. Leadership at Anderson is cultivated through skill development and coalition building. Participants in the program are addressed as leaders from an early age. CCAT (Children Creating and Transforming) is the children/youth's strand of the organization; many of their parents are adult members of Anderson. What surprised me when I analyzed the data was how the group saw leadership as working *with* people and not in the traditional sense of hierarchical "leading." The time given for children and youth to share their opinions when CCAT gets together could play a role here. I didn't get to ask questions about why they thought their views on leadership varied from the dominant model of leadership as a solo pursuit for a charismatic individual, or what their school experience teaches them about leadership, but these are questions for future research.

Before talking to the youth about leadership, I commented to Bonnie that my own understanding of leadership had evolved over the time (Researcher, Interview with Bonnie, October 23, 2019). Since I'd been at Anderson, it now included broadening out the term of

leadership to see all the children and youth as leaders. I said that I saw that they have a different way, and that what they're contributing might not be as obvious, but it is leadership within a community organizing frame.

> So it's leadership within those relationships. That it's not leadership to the point of being hierarchical and telling people what to do. It's not that type of leader. So the data I collected from the group did reflect what I'd been thinking about, but I maybe didn't expect the youth to be as perceptive as they were. (Liz in Interview with Bonnie, October 23, 2019)

Over the time I've been working with the program, I've been witness to powerful discussions where the children and youth have had their experiences and words valued highly. As a coordinator, Bonnie is always putting the CCAT voices forward. She puts much thought regarding content and concepts into the meetings, and she has a clear goal of what she wants the group to engage with.

When asked what leadership meant to her, Lorena said that she thinks of "teamwork and asking for different opinions on pretty much everything" (Interview, December 10, 2019). This is a powerful articulation of what responsive and inclusive leadership looks like. It also creates a vulnerable space where opinions can be challenged. Lorena went on to say that leadership is also about "a lot of equality, because everybody should be able to know about the information I know and learn about" (Interview, December 10, 2019). Lorena has been a committed CCAT member from the very beginning. Her mother works with the Parents Creating and Transforming program, and she has an older sister and a younger sister in the organization. Lorena has been speaking up at school board meetings for a number of years, and her quiet disposition belies the strength she has in speaking up for herself and

others. Leadership as sharing knowledge is another aspect of leadership often absent from a more traditionally held view.

Vienna said that leadership means teamwork, because it wasn't just one person doing the workshop, it was a group of people (Vienna, November 18, 2019). She also said that she thinks of sisterhood, since she got to bond with the others in the group. Vienna has an older and a younger brother, so she likely appreciates the time with the girls in the workshop group. (It wasn't an explicit choice to have the workshop be all girls; there were a few boys interested, but they needed to work over the summer and couldn't come to Minnesota with us.) Vienna also thinks of leadership as hardworking. She says that it was hard work to do, but it was something they did in a group. This lightened the load.

Talia sees leadership as "not being the main person that everyone is focusing on in a group." For her, leadership is "standing up for a group of people" (November 18, 2019). Talia resists a view of leadership as a single person leading the charge and asserts that leadership at Anderson and within the CCAT program is in opposition to an individualistic model. She counters the idea that a leader should be followed; instead the leader/s is/are standing up for what people's needs are. Her participation in the workshop, and the time she has at meetings to be able to share her concerns and her wishes for the world, supports her in this (Field notes, November 18, 2019).

For Marta, leadership is taking responsibility and being the bigger person to help people in good ways. She says it's not to boss people around, but to be helpful and to do so in an inspirational way. Marta compares herself to how moms do it, "How a parent does it, how they put their kids first. I put other people first and then myself" (Interview, February 4, 2020). This comment ties back to what Marta said to the SRO in the Great Debate regarding

children being the whole world to their parents (Fieldnotes, July 9, 2019). Marta has learned how to express herself more fully through her involvement with CCAT. She says that before coming to CCAT she wasn't good at adding on to her statements.

> Now I put more into that answer. I also learned to not be scared to say something, cuz I used to be [before coming to Anderson]… I would get so nervous if someone asked me a question. If you would ask me something, I would turn red. I would start shaking. (Interview, February 4, 2020)

Marta is very reflective and perceptive of her own growth—from intense nervousness to being able to participate fully and authentically. Marta shares that she grew out of only giving very short answers to questions, and she thinks Anderson will help her younger sister Clara with it too. Clara is already gaining in confidence and is becoming more vocal in meetings especially around her academic needs (Researcher journal, February 4, 2020).

Leaders who listen

Before speaking directly to the youth about leadership, I wondered whether they might be a leader who listens (Memo**,** November 16, 2019)**.** I wanted to know what they thought were their strengths, and how they were as leaders. I asked myself whether they inspire people through passion and a call to action, and/or whether they present the facts in a straightforward manner, and/or do they pull on personal experiences (Memo**,** November 16, 2019). Being in conversation with Talia and Vienna at the same time led to more fruitful conversation than the one-on-one conversations with Lorena and Marta. Clara had other commitments and wasn't able to be at CCAT meetings as much as she might have liked, so I

wasn't able to ask her about her thoughts on the matter. Kelly lives too far away from Anderson to be able to be part of the meetings.

I was pleased to hear that many of the answers Talia and Vienna gave drew directly from a place of listening and teamwork. Talia commented that in CCAT she has learned to become a better listener, and this helps her in her leadership practices. Bonnie asserted, "If you can't listen, you can't lead, or you'd only be leading yourself!" (November 18, 2019). Listening is a critical component of dialogue, and it is often an underappreciated literacy skill. Without the ability to listen and process other people's words, it's not possible to create collaborative texts and engage in community activism.

Talia mentioned that being involved with the CCAT program has helped move her from someone who wanted things her way into someone who is able to listen better to others. "And now that I come to CCAT [it's] just like, my mindset has changed a lot, especially when it comes to hearing people out" (Talia, November 18, 2019). The ability to listen more closely to people around you helps ensure that people's voices are actively heard and brought into the conversation. Talia acknowledges her ability to listen better, and this is possibly related to the fact that she is also able to share her stories with an attentive audience.

> Vienna: I feel most proud of the amount of people who we've gotten to support us—
>
> Talia: And also I feel like not only the people who helped us but the people we helped as well. Yep.

This is a supportive move and acknowledges the contributions of the group and the importance of their work.

Leadership within the CCAT program is mutually constituted with responsibilities shared across participants. It involves a horizontal model of leadership molded to community

organizing. When asked about her leadership style, Talia said, “I just feel like I like helping other people” (November 18, 2019). Talia was proud of receiving a leadership award at her school for helping welcome an immigrant student and for supporting his learning (Field notes, October 4th, 2019). She has continued to support this student, and she referenced him when we spoke about academic inequality in SLUSD schools (Field notes, October 15, 2019).

When asked about what she takes with her outside of CCAT, Lorena said that group activities have been important to her (Lorena, Interview, December 10. 2019). “Um, I guess helping others. Using other people’s ideas when you’ve run out of them, step back and step forward and, um, I guess that has helped me a lot” (Lorena, Interview, December 10, 2019). Of note here is that Lorena puts forward a key piece of collaboration, which is using other people’s ideas. So often in school, there is an emphasis on individualized knowledge and how much one person “knows” compared to another. Each piece of what Lorena says here is sociocultural in nature and relates to how we live with each other in society. Regarding the workshop, Vienna said that she learned that “bringing people together can make a change, like a slight change, it might not be big but it still makes a change” (Vienna, Interview, July 19, 2019).

It was heart-warming to hear the children and youth speak about themselves as leaders and about how they view leadership as a collective effort. Anderson as an organization actively challenges hegemony and oppressive educational conditions to better support students and their families. The children and youth in the CCAT program develop leadership skills that challenge conventional views of leadership as hierarchical and top-

down. In their own words, and with their specific skills, the children and youth in the CCAT program challenge traditionally held wisdom regarding their capabilities.

While I understand now that these are counternarratives, at the time I didn't view them as such, as this is one of the goals of the organization. Even so, within the organization, CCAT's contributions attest to the power of the program that Bonnie founded. Considering that, for twenty years, there was a program for high school youth and for parents but not one for children in elementary and middle school, this is important data to collect. The executive director of the Anderson Collective was present in Minneapolis, and the political director came to the T4SJ conference. I was very pleased they were able to see what the children and youth are fully capable of.

The CCAT children and youth developed an understanding of their personal leadership style and the styles of the group through composing and facilitating *the workshop* and being involved in other literacy events such as the annual Trick or Chant. While text production isn't necessarily a central component of leadership development, strengthening children's and youth's identities through dialogue and collaboration is a key part of their growth within and outside of the organization. This inherently involves developing and sustaining transformative political discourse and activism, as they engage in leadership activities and grow in knowledge of self.

The CCAT children and youth always talk about leadership as helping people, as listening, as using other people's ideas (Field notes, February 4th, 2020). I said to Marta, "This [what you are saying] is really beautiful, and that also shows, I think, what you're learning at CMAC, and that those ideas of leadership become mixed around from what society might see as leadership" (Researcher in Interview with Marta, February 4th, 2020). I

missed a chance to follow up this statement by asking why she thinks this might be, as I've missed opportunities at other times.

Leadership and civic engagement

Through their work with CCAT, the children and youth enact tenets of citizenship as they are writing themselves into their civic lives. They are practicing for a future where their already powerful voices will be amplified. In an interview with Bonnie, I commented that civic engagement at Anderson is coming from a member base so it's on the members' terms, rather than being defined from outside (October 23, 2019). I noted that it's not a matter of simply learning about how a bill goes through Congress, or how people get elected and what their responsibilities are. I continued,

> It's about standing up and effecting change in the now. So it's not civic literacy to kind of just be another cog in the machine. It's civic literacies that are coming from their own, like how they want to show up in this space. They want to show up in these civic spaces, in these political spaces with what comes from them. (Liz – researcher/author in Interview with Bonnie, October 23, 2019).

Civics and citizenship involve taking on an active role within society to improve society as a whole. When asked what she learned from doing *the workshop*, Vienna said that she learned to listen better, to make responsible decisions, and to use what she is learning in the outside world (Vienna, November 18, 2019). When asked for an example, Vienna shared a story of when she educated a woman on the bus about the woman's use of the n-word. Vienna asked the woman if she knew where the word came from and that it was used to degrade people. When the woman countered with, "well Black people are saying it," Vienna

said, “Well, they’ve taken the word that you used to degrade them, and made it into something positive to like greet each other, but you guys are using it in a different way” (November 18, 2019). The woman then said to Vienna that she didn’t know why Vienna was telling her this, as she (Vienna) isn’t Black. Vienna asserted that she was educating her (the woman on the bus) on why she shouldn’t use the n-word.

Vienna’s mastery of rhetoric and pedagogy in this example is powerful and worthy of praise. Civics involves knowing what communities need and how we can live together. Genuine civics involves questioning oppressive structures. This instance of Vienna educating the woman on the bus about the use of the n-word is a powerful example of civics in action. Vienna let the woman know why the word is offensive when spoken by a White person, while acknowledging the contemporary use of the word. She also let others on the bus know that this wasn’t okay and demonstrated allyship with the African American community. Vienna’s commitment to and engagement with the CCAT program has helped lead her here (Field notes, November 18, 2019). She is drawing on her community organizing, racial literacy, and leadership skills that have developed throughout the program. Vienna has spoken up at City Hall to ask for Juvenile Hall to be shut down. She appears as confident in front of a large crowd as she does in a more intimate setting.

In November, I noted that we needed to be ramping up the political involvement and that it was possible that with Tyrone and Vienna meeting with school board commissioners that this can become more common (Memo, November 3, 2019). At the same time, I questioned the place of hegemonically sanctioned political action and activism, such as speaking up at the school board and peacefully protesting in the street and at City Hall. This is a central tension in the work, as simply relying on traditional methods of civic engagement

does not achieve transformative change. We need to challenge the ways in which people are expected to behave when raising injustices and inequities.

Talia was asked the same question about what she takes with her from CCAT, and while she doesn't have an example such as Vienna's, she does say that she is working on using skills she learns at CCAT in the outside world.

> I've never tried actually, I guess, standing up for either myself or someone else, but I feel like I should try it. I feel like it will make me feel better and probably someone else feel better. Yeah, I don't know it just scares me, because I feel like sometimes people can react really different. (Talia, November 18, 2019)

Talia stated that she wanted to become a stronger advocate for others in her community, and she acknowledged the journey it takes to get there. It can be scary for adults to speak up, let alone an eleven-year-old girl. There is nuance involved when she says that it will make her feel better, as this is far from a self-centered stance. Talia has a very strong sense of justice and belief in a world different from the one we currently occupy. She is looking to defend the rights of vulnerable people. In the workshop, Talia took on key parts and not only shared information but also facilitated group conversations with empathy and purpose. Her physical presence speaks strongly to her commitment to social justice, and her words are always powerful (Field notes, November 18, 2019).

Leadership in relation to poverty and power

At a recent CCAT meeting Vienna responded to the prompt of *What would your wish be for the world?*

> I'm going to use my wish on ending poverty and like, how the economic systems are built, basically like, um. Having an equal amount of money for each economic class, I guess. But then also like I wouldn't want just *them* to have power, just them to have power. I would want everyone to have power. Cuz like I was helping my mom study for her citizenship test [and] the questions were like "Who has the highest source of power to like, to something." I was like "What?" What's the [point]. Why is that a question? (September 26, 2019)

Vienna's final comment here shows why it's so important to listen to youth. Citizenship is often framed as what people must do in order to become a citizen. It's about rules that must be followed, without questioning those rules. Here, it's about ensuring that people who wish to become citizens in the United States know who they are subject to. When Vienna says she wants everyone to have power, she shows an understanding of power as fluid and contextual, and her imagination takes her where she would like society to be. She also demonstrates a critique of the kind of knowledge required on a citizenship test (Researcher's journal, September 30, 2019). This is not a naïve viewpoint in Vienna's mind, and she also shows an understanding of capitalism and the forces that hold people back. It's not enough to say you want poverty to end; you have to have an idea of how this can come about. This illustrates how Vienna views leadership and how community organizing is seen through her eyes. In this she is supported, as CCAT and the organization as a whole are challenging dominant power structures.

The literacy practices the CCAT children and youth engage in have immediate relevance to their lives. It's not a matter of isolated and decontextualized language use and practice. The commitment the youth have to the workshop and other CCAT activities is brought about by consensus decision-making and activities that get them thinking and engaged with material. It is an example of being inclusive rather than exclusive, because it assumes that *everyone* in society—including young people—are citizens who simply move *through* citizenship-as-practice, from the cradle to the grave. It shows "Direct concern with full and complete lives of young people" (Lawy & Biesta, 2006, p. 43).

Summary of Findings

Working together to create and develop a workshop on overpolicing in schools, preparing to speak to the SLUSD School Board, and other practices within the CCAT program (such as Trick or Chant for Liberation) bring children and youth together to create work on topics relevant to their lives, especially to their lives in school. The literacy skills the youth engage with include the oral mediation of thoughts and opinions through dialogue and collaboration. They also include rehearsal and repetition of language and discourse, before taking work to an outside audience.

Taking on a community organizing model leads to transformative political discourse, as the children and youth gain understanding of issues affecting their education and as they gain an understanding of the role they can play within the collective and beyond. As the CCAT children and youth worked together to create and develop *the workshop*—and other literacy events, such as preparing a speech for the school board—they used dialogic and collaborative techniques to compose the texts. A lack of follow-through in the non-workshop

related activities, due to outside requirements, led to this area being underdeveloped in terms of text production, and this is an area for future growth.

The findings show that the CCAT children and youth develop and sustain transformative political discourse and activism through their literacy practices. It isn't clear what the role of dialogic and collaborative *writing* plays in this process, and this is potentially an area for future research. Dialogue does play an important role, and use of dialogue as an act of love (Freire, 1970) is apparent. The children and youth are involved in community organizing, along with their parents and siblings, and the collaborative nature of all work with Anderson helps bond members in activism and personal growth. Concerns are taken seriously, and these concerns are addressed through dialogue and action.

Janks (2000) asserts that critical literacy always requires an action step, and this work demonstrates the actions taken by the children and youth to act upon their world with words of power and potential. They embody the wisdom of Freire and Macedo (1987) when they talk about "reading the word and the world." While the children and youth didn't engage in as much writing practice as I was hoping for, I feel that the findings illustrate the possibilities for more writing in the future. We must look for the "crawl spaces" (Gillen, 2014) that make the writing tasks relevant and critical to the children and youth's lives. I would like to see writing used as more than an organizational tool; I would like to see it used as a creative tool to build ideas and to showcase the brilliance of their language and expression.

Initially, I was hoping to focus more closely on writing, but it became apparent that I needed to challenge my traditionally held views, as well as focus on the actual work of the organization. Regarding to what extent collaborative writing assists in developing and

sustaining transformative political discourse, it is probably fairer to say that collaborative literacy practices all together have moved the youth forward. The goals of the program are to develop and sustain transformative political discourse and activism, and this comes through the activities in the program. It is impressive how the youth and children are able to articulate the goals of the organization very much in their own words, with their own experiences and without prompting, to the benefit of all.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This ethnographic case study explored the ways in which community organizing principles nurture the literacy practices of children and youth in an out-of-school-hours advocacy program. The work is informed by my belief in critical literacy and community organizing as tools to change the world. Critical literacy requires of us an active lens—to see the ways in which language and literacy position us. Community organizing brings us together to fight for the greater good. Together, they provided a rich context for my study.

As stated in Chapter 1, Mein (2009) notes that the current focus on globalization(s) and literacy has led to an expansion of what counts as literacy, text, and learning among researchers, but the opposite is true when it comes to mainstream understanding and practice. This study highlights the work being done in a community organization whose central focus is education justice and equity. This research project was initially designed to look at dialogic and collaborative writing and writing practices, but this shifted fairly early on to focus on literacy practices more broadly. It became apparent that dialogue and collaboration within the program mostly occurred in conversation and in action with others rather than on the page—either actual or digital.

I begin here by connecting the data to the research questions. I will then discuss two topics in broader terms: community organizing and critical literacy, and leadership and civic engagement. I will then move to recommendations for future research and closing thoughts.

The overarching question was: ***In what ways do children and youth engage in critical literacy practices and political action in an after-school community organization?*** In response to this question, I identified that a key component of the work undertaken by the

children and youth was pedagogical in nature, with a view to educating themselves and then sharing that with a larger public. The literacy practices with which the children and youth engaged involved embodiment of current affairs and political concerns, and this was translated into actions to educate the wider public. It was consistently collaborative in nature and in response to others in the group. Goals were shared, and strategies were worked on as a group.

Examples of the ways in which they accomplished this include: the creation of an interactive workshop on policing in schools (#OurEducationWillNotBePoliced), writing a speech to be read during public comment at a school board meeting, planning a podcast, and taking part in the Halloween *Trick or Chant for Liberation*[10]. The children and youth researched topics that were of direct consequence to their lives, and they gathered and synthesized this information to make it easier to pass on to other people. This is a key component of community organizing work.

Community organizing is about pedagogy and gathering resources. When collecting the research, the children and youth helped each other out as needed, and they had time to talk within the group about the information they were learning and why it's important we talk about certain issues such as poverty in the US (October 10, 2019). In this case, Vienna connected poverty to racism in her own words: "it's accepted that if you're not this race you don't get as much money" (October 10, 2019). The question about poverty had been raised by others in the group and was chosen as a topic to address further (Field notes, October 10, 2019). Talking about topics with direct impact on their lives in public was seen in the workshop and also the Trick or Chant for Liberation.

[10] Trick or Chant was a modified "trick or treat" event, where the children took the chants to their communities, asking for rights as well as Halloween candy.

A central goal of community organizing is to effect change and to create more equitable systems for people. Literacy practices and political action go hand in hand. The children and youth used literacy skills to elaborate their arguments with strong purpose. As the children and youth were researching, they were also making pedagogical decisions as to what would engage an audience most. They were informally analyzing the material they came across for truth and reliability, as well as for potent messaging.

The research process also involved reading and researching alternate points of view, to be able to understand why some people are opposed to social justice issues (such as painting down a mural at a local high school), in order to better understand what the counterarguments are. In this case, students at the school have fought for decades to have the murals painted over as their imagery is traumatic, racist, and ignorant of history. The counterargument is that painting over the murals is censorship and that they should stay, regardless of their emotional impact on the students.

As well as planning specific actions, the children and youth met on a weekly basis while the parent members had their meeting. This was an intimate space for the young people, and one where community-building occurred. Grassroots organizer and Baltimore Algebra Project founder Bob Moses reminds us of the central function of meetings as places where ordinary people learn to see themselves as public figures—in the sense of acting in a public space (Gillen, 2019). Similarly, through these meetings, the CCAT children and youth had space to share their experiences, and they learned about the root causes behind these inequities they face.

As the children and youth learned more about particular issues relevant to their daily lives, they were inspired to take action. Marta described her learning curve by saying that at

first she was really surprised that overpolicing was happening in schools, and when she knew more about it and knew of ways to help out, that spurred her into action (Marta, Interview, July 31, 2019). As an older CCAT member, Marta is in a mentor role to the younger members, including her sister. Marta credited Anderson for her ability to speak up more (Interview, February 4, 2020), and her framing of the process here shows she is motivated to help others and to improve their schooling experiences. In this, she was indexing transformative action on a personal as well as a societal level.

Moving from the intimate space of the meetings into a more public arena took place when the youth presented the interactive workshop at a local education equity conference, the members' retreat, and at two national education justice and equity conferences. The document that was prepared for the school board wasn't shared during the research study (data collection stage), but I was present when the two youth who worked on it spoke up at a Juneteenth 2020 event to call for an end to policing in schools—a move that was successful in SLUSD, and in many other school districts as well.

The podcast project remained within the group, and while the children and youth practiced making them, they didn't share them publicly. The *Trick or Chant for Liberation* was shared within the close community, as the children and youth walked up and down the block. Two of the youngest members—at seven years old—took control of the bullhorn and called out "We want justice for our schools." It is highly likely these children will be part of a greater movement to effect change as they grow in knowledge and purpose.

My second research question was: ***To what extent does community organizing help the children and youth in the CCAT program participate in and respond to critical literacy practices?***

Community organizing was central to the work the children and youth in the CCAT engaged in. They were aware of the power of community and working collaboratively to problem solve and strategize. Some of the youth spoke up more frequently than others and attended more meetings, but it's understood that we all worked together and that no one person is more important than another. Instead, the group held each other up and helped where needed.

Community organizing lifts the voices of all involved. Two of the youth have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), but I wasn't aware of this until one of them talked about her school not helping her as they should be. When I looked up the school the other youth attended, I saw that it's also a school for children with IEPs. Both of these youth speak up and contribute to discussion. In the Anderson setting, there is nothing holding them back, and whatever they have to contribute is welcomed. This is relevant to the parent meetings, as well. Parents come to the organization with a variety of skills; formal literacy skills, such as those taught in school, are not requisite for participation.

Community organizing generally requires physical presence, but not everyone can be in the street or other public places. The children and youth in the CCAT program were all able to be in public places and didn't have any physical hindrances. The spirit in which they developed the workshop, however, could have translated over if someone felt more comfortable being part of the behind-the-scenes work.

Similar to what was said in response to question one, the goals of community organizing are to strategize in order to effect change and to work together to plan activities.

But before that, there is looking into an issue and learning more about it, and the goal of teaching others is paramount. At Anderson, for example, the parents learn about issues facing other members, as well as bringing their own issues to the group. As a whole, people identify what action can be taken and how that action can be taken. The collaborative nature of community organizing is one of the things that stands out. This allows people to take risks in their learning and in their teaching.

*My third research question was****: How does community organizing foster critical reflection among the CCAT youth?***

The work with which the children and youth in the CCAT program engaged consistently required critical reflection. The knowledge and skills they gained in citywide meetings were always related to issues of inequities and ways in which these can be addressed. The root causes of inequities were explored and discussed. Direct instruction took place, but it was always followed by reflections and checking in for understanding. It was also a case of tying larger struggles to the smaller struggles the children and youth face on a daily basis.

The affordances of the Anderson setting allowed for out-of-school practices that simultaneously critiqued school district policy and practices while developing advocacy skills that helped the children and youth cement their expertise and solidify their credentials as community organizers. The literacy skills gained through such actions were strengthened by identifying the impact of their work on other people and also on themselves. In the case of eliminating school police, it might seem that things moved very quickly—which, on one hand, they did, but it's on the back of work that's been done over many years by Anderson and coalitional partners. Bonnie made sure that this struggle was placed in context, by

including context in the slideshow for the workshop and by making sure the youth knew what gave Anderson the credentials to talk about this (July 9, 2019).

The historical context relating to the organization and the varied struggles played a role in the activism of the children and youth. They are standing on the shoulders of others who have come before them, and there is a strong and purposeful legacy behind them. The children and youth understood it takes effort, and they see the effort the other members—such as their parents and people in the Youth Creating and Transforming program—are putting in. Members across the organization take time out of their lives to be part of these movements. The coalitional nature of the work means that campaigns related to housing justice or immigration justice or other related struggles are connected. The larger ecology of Bay Area community organizing supports and sustains their work.

Discussion

Community organizing and critical literacy

Critical literacy inherently involves the questioning of power structures (Janks, 2000; Vasquez, 2014) and highlights how literacy can be a catalyst for social change. It requires questioning of dominant worldviews and can lead to writing yourself and your community into imagined civic futures in both body and mind. Critical literacy is an ideological imperative, not a method. Vasquez, Janks and Comber (2019) assert, “Students learn as much about critical analysis from being actively involved in the design and production process as they do from their questioning of texts produced by others” (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 302). Text production was central to the work the children and youth did, in the form of writing pen to paper, artistic expression and embodiment of critical issues with a goal of self and

societal transformation. In critical literacy, an action piece is essential (Janks, 2010), and this happened with the majority of the work the CCAT children and youth presented. It was understood that community organizing is a lifelong practice and is coalitional; for example, Anderson's main focus is educational justice and equity, but this intersects with housing justice, migration justice, and juvenile justice, to name a few.

This after-school community organizing space allowed for everybody to share and to have their voice heard. The workshop was a distillation of the work they have been involved with at CCAT. The way they facilitated is how they've seen it modelled. They've seen the passion and the commitment of others in the organization, and this encouraged them to speak their truth. It's impressive that they were able to do this at a young age. The intergenerational and multi-age nature of the program plays an important role in this, too. The starting points to learning are true for everyone in the space. No one is the arbiter of all the knowledge, and knowledge by itself isn't important; it's what is done with this knowledge. It's how this knowledge is used to strengthen an argument, to explore a topic, to identify what the key concerns are. In the CCAT space, support is given the moment you walk in. The collective knowledge is not part of an individual but is part of the community; the knowledge the children and youth gain is in service of making their lives and others' more equitable and just.

It could be said that community organizing *is* critical literacy, in practice and in theory. Community plays an important role in critical literacy interactions, and it can be argued that while literacy is an aspect of an individual's identity, it is also a feature of "the collective and joint capabilities of a group, community or society" (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 4). This echoes the concept of "reading the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

As per Vasquez (2001), we seek to construct spaces where social justice issues are raised and a critical curriculum is negotiated. What remains constant (in critical literacy) is its social justice purpose and commitment to social action, no matter how small (Janks, 2010). This is evident in all that the people at Anderson do.

Leadership and civic engagement

When the children and youth talked about leadership, they were imbued with collective spirit. They saw leadership within the community organizing space as non-hierarchical and as mutually constitutive; for example, when Talia said that she is proud of the fact that not only did people help them, but they helped others as well (November 18, 2019). In conversation with Eve Ewing (Ewing & Kaba, 2019), abolitionist and organizer Mariame Kaba states that activism by itself is not sustainable. She asserts that "most organizers are activists also, but most activists are not organizers, and so we just have to be clear about what we're trying to achieve." It's important that we understand the legacy and the context of the work that goes into community organizing, in order to understand that this is the work of a lifetime—and of lifetimes.

Mariame Kaba (2019) also speaks about accountability when working with others, and that people need to be accountable one to the other. This accountability was manifest in the commitment the youth in the workshop group had towards each other and to their audiences. The work they engaged with was all voluntary, and the youth were intrinsically motivated to take part. It is harder to link the other examples to an accountability model, as the children and youth didn't necessarily have a choice about coming to the Tuesday night community meetings. When they were there, however, community-building played a role, as

well as how we can be together in community.

Talia described changing her mindset and becoming a better listener through being part of the program. She commented that before, people would say to her, "you never listen to anybody, you want to do everything your way," and that now she is much better at hearing people out (Talia, November 18th, 2019). This level of self-reflection and metacognition is to be commended in someone so young. It also helps explains her commitment to the program and the positive effect it's had on her life. It's possible that this also comes from having the confidence in knowing her stories are being listened to and that they are worthy of sharing with a large public.

Civic engagement

Imagining a world free of oppressions and discrimination, and viewing yourself as part of this work, is necessary before we can truly begin. On introducing Mariame Kaba, abolitionist and educator Eve Ewing (2019) wrote that Kaba always takes the bold way, "choosing imagination where others might choose compromise." Rukia Lumumba (Education for Liberation Network, 2020) asserted that adults and elders need to have patience and relinquish our ideas of power and that "We need the brilliance of young minds to lead us to a new future." Building from this Amir Casimir, (Education for Liberation Network, 2020) commented that adults can prompt critical thought in youth, but they/we need to be willing to let young people guide them/us out of their/our comfort zone, and that youth will answer in unique way.

Bonnie commented that the CCAT space is a refuge for the children and youth (Interview, October 23, 2019). It is also a space to reflect on issues of injustice and

inequities, and problem-solve ways to address these. The workshop finished with imagination stations, such as badge-making and decorating affirmations. Bonnie commented that this shows what thriving looks like, and that "it looks like us all working together as a community to figure out what we need and how we can get it and how we can provide it for each other" (Bonnie, July 1st, 2019). Imagination and joy are critical components of education justice work.

The civic and political education the CCAT children and youth gained was wide ranging and often contrasted with the education the children and youth got in school. As an organization, political education plays a key role, so members understand the context of why certain things are the way they are and how they can be challenged. Gallo, Link, and Somerville (2019) assert that to counter narrow definitions of civic education that tend to be reflective of White middle class practices, it is important to expand our approaches to civic education, so that we can build on the civic experiences and real-world concerns that diverse students bring to the classroom. The example of Vienna educating the woman on the bus about the use of the n-word is a powerful example of civics in action. Vienna addressed the woman with calm and respect and made sure her point was understood. A fellow passenger expressed her appreciation to Vienna for speaking up (Vienna, November 18, 2019).

Lawy and Biesta (2006) contrast *citizenship-as-achievement*, linked to duty and responsibility, and *citizenship-as-practice*, an inclusive and relational concept that provides a much more robust framework that respects the claim to citizenship status of everyone in society, including children and young people. Vienna speaking up to the woman on the bus reflected *citizenship-as-practice*. Education for citizenship has often been seen as an exercise in civics education and "good" citizenship (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). The notion of "good

citizenship" is that of a compliant consumer class who do not question or threaten the status quo. Children and youth aren't as swayed by these arguments, and citizenship-as-practice is "a way of developing and nurturing the social and critical capabilities of young people" (Lawy & Biesta, 2006, p. 39). It is critical that children and youth are given opportunities to embody this work.

There is a transformative power in feeling an integral part of society as a citizen, with a mutual set of rights and responsibilities. Community organizing supports this sense of belonging and purpose. The work of Anderson acknowledges that all young people are integral to society and echoes Lawy and Biesta's claims that young people's lives are implicated in the wider socio-political, economic, and cultural order, and that "this engagement with the conditions of their lives is crucial" (Lawy & Biesta, 2006, p. 43). The children and youth at Anderson were able to put themselves in the struggle either physically, emotionally, or intellectually. They were able to see that there was a space for them and that they could be fully grounded in this work.

Recommendations

Future research

The findings from this study offer rich potential for future studies that continue to look at community organizing through a critical literacy lens. As well as continuing with this study on a long-term basis, areas of potential future research include exploring the ways children in early childhood settings respond to critical literacy and community organizing, and examining the role of intergenerational participation in this organization and others like it.

Early childhood education

The data here was weighted towards the older children in the group, so it would be useful to explore what this work would look like with the younger children. Vivian Vasquez (2014) drew on her work with preschoolers when theorizing what critical literacy is and should look like. Vasquez, Janks, and Comber (2019) note that children who engage in critical literacy from a young age are prepared to make informed decisions regarding issues such as power and control, to engage in the practice of democratic citizenship, and to develop an ability to think and act ethically. As such, "They would be better able to contribute to making the world a more equitable and socially just place" (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 307). These are all practices that the CCAT program supports; this absolutely reflects what CCAT is about.

Working with the children in the early years of schooling up to later elementary could be fertile ground from which to grow a bond between critical literacy and community organizing. It is possible that the older children could serve as mentors in this process.

Intergenerational organizing and literacies

During an interview with Bonnie, I mentioned that something I love about Anderson is its intergenerational character, especially as it relates to education justice and equity (Researcher during interview with Bonnie, October 23rd, 2019). Future research in this area, tying community organizing to critical literacy, would add to existing literature that addresses community literacies (Alvarez, 2017; Campano et al., 2016; Hull & Schultz, 2002a), community organizing (Carnochan & Austin, 2011),, and intergenerational literacy practices (Gregory et al., 2004; Long et al., 2002; McKee & Heydon, 2015). The nature of

intergenerational learning and the role of mentoring and apprenticeship within this education justice setting could be a fruitful place to start.

It is critical that we "work alongside community experts who are often unsung heroes, but whose commitment to community engagement, revitalization, learning, and justice is unwavering" (Kinloch, 2018). Kinloch stresses that we must be invited into these community spaces and that we fashion multiple types of sustainable education partnerships with people in these communities. It isn't up to us as university-based researchers to set the agenda to suit our needs, but rather we should learn from the communities we work with and listen to their needs.

Closing thoughts

On Juneteenth 2020, NBC news Bay Area covered a protest taking place to call for the defunding of school police. Vienna and Bonnie were interviewed and shown on the news. Vienna called for "finding the root cause of what happened [in school], instead of having police involved with the punishment." Her facility in front of the camera can be tied directly to her experience with this workshop. Vienna knows she isn't just speaking for herself, but for the wider community, and that collaboration and shared work helped her arrive here.

The purpose of much ethnographic research is to inform, illuminate, and inspire. Erickson (1985) writes that we present conclusions from ethnographic research as "possible" rather than "certain." Ethnography is a tool by which we can examine practices and remain in conversation with other scholars doing similar work. It is a tool that can also reach people outside of academia, as one of its goals is to illuminate, not to occlude.

This study makes the argument that, for transformative social action to happen, community organizing principles need to be harnessed to critical literacy skills. Therefore, a

key conclusion from this study is that community organizing principles support children's and youth's social and academic learning as they acknowledge that we all need different starting points and we all have something to contribute. Within the community organizing space, there is equality and equity of voice and participation. Leadership is built among community members in a non-hierarchical fashion, and the younger children see themselves as leaders within the collective. In addition, this study makes an argument for additional research, in this same setting, on how children in the early childhood grades engage in critical literacy practices, as well as exploring the intergenerational nature of literacy practices within this community.

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APPENDIX A

Questions for Bonnie

1. In three words how would you describe the CCAT Program?
2. What are your goals for the CCAT program over the summer period?
3. Thinking back from when you first started the program, what have you been most proud of?
4. What literacy practices do you engage in on a daily basis? Weekly basis?
5. How do you view the role of writing for social and political activism??
6. What do you understand by dialogic writing? Collaborative writing?

APPENDIX B

Questions for the youth who took part in the workshop #OurEducationWillNotBePoliced

1. What do you feel most proud about?
2. What words come to mind when you think of your leadership styles?
3. What skills have you learned through doing the workshop?
4. How did it feel doing the workshop in San Francisco as opposed to Minneapolis?
5. How has creating and implementing the workshop helped you at school?
6. What do you see as next steps for your work at CCAT?
7. What are some of your goals for the year ahead?
8. How can we support you in reaching these goals?