

Learning Locally: Place Conscious Education in an Urban Charter School

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son Finnegan. I hope you find a love of learning as I have.

Abstract

This qualitative study explores how students' and their teacher implement Place-Conscious Education (PCE) in an English Language Arts (ELA) classroom and their perceptions of PCE and learning.

One ELA teacher and twelve 7th grade students participated in this study, which took place at a small, public charter school in a large urban school district. Data were collected from multiple sources including classroom observations, interviews with the teacher and students, and artifacts found both in the classroom and the school. Data were then coded and analyzed which allowed specific patterns or themes to emerge inductively.

Using a conceptual framework based upon Gruenewald's (2003) critical pedagogy of place supported by the constructs of *conscientizacao* (Freire, 1970) and the development of narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002), this study focuses on the experiences that lead participants to engage in certain characteristics of place-based education and their perceptions of that engagement. Narrative analysis and discourse analysis provided the methods for a close analysis of the students' and teacher's perceptions concerning PCE in their classroom. The teacher made an effort to include PCE and critical themes into her instruction in the hopes to connect to student's lived experiences and to make learning relevant. The students dialogically connected what they were learning in the class to their own lived experiences. The concept of dialogic connections is explored both from Bakhtin and Freire's theoretical underpinnings.

The findings of this study suggest that characteristics of PCE are found in an English Language Arts classroom that focuses on both project-based learning and critical thinking. These characteristics of PCE include a connection to students' lived experiences, using a critical lens to discuss texts being read in class, and a deliberate connection between the curriculum in the classroom and the local community. The dialogic connection of PCE to learning allows for students to locate their learning in their own lived experiences and to make their learning relevant.

Implications of this study suggest that using characteristics of PCE in the classroom benefits students' learning experiences. Teachers using PCE make learning relevant, connected to student's lived experiences, and framed locally. In order to use PCE, teachers need to examine the communities in which they teach and utilize the authentic resources that are available to them from the community. The walls of the school should become transparent so that community and school are collaborating in education and students are then able to see their own connections and place.

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Chapter 1
Introduction
Place Conscious Education

What We Need Is Here

by Wendell Berry

*Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.*

There is a growing trend to locally source food, labor, and goods; however this trend does not extend far enough. Education should also be locally sourced from people and organizations in the community. Too often educators are not familiar with the community in which they are teaching; therefore, connecting their classrooms to the larger community is difficult. In an era of standardization and accountability, uniformity in curriculum is emphasized over connections to the community or student lives. Even teachers that are from the communities in which they teach often find the classroom experience and the learning that occurs therein removed from the life of the community and the lived experiences of their students.

Learning that occurs in schools has been sterilized, standardized, and removed from lived experiences. Students learn history, but it is not the history of their community. Students learn languages, but these languages are from a book and not from an actual

native speaker. Students learn math, but it is removed from a purpose like community building or budgeting. Students learn to write, but without meaning like a proposal for action within a community or to share information with the public. Students learn science, but it is inside the confines of a classroom instead of project based in the very environment they learn about. This disconnect between students' lived experiences and the curriculum is addressed by a place conscious pedagogy.

Place-Conscious Education PCE

Gruenewald (2008) purposed a pedagogy that juxtaposes critical learning with place-based education and terms this marriage a place-conscious education (PCE). A main corollary of PCE is to extend pedagogy outwards towards the community and extend learning to incorporate the lived experiences of students; this includes culture, history, community, family, social constructs, and the ecological environment. As a prominent theorist of PCE, Gruenewald (2003) states that PCE aims to work against the isolation found in schooling discourses and practices from the living world outside and the increasing placelessness of institutions of education (as cited in Nespor, 2008).

Thus extended, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experiences of students and teachers, and accountability is conceptualized so that place matters to educators, students, and citizens in tangible ways (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 620).

Therefore, PCE enlists teachers, students, and community members to incorporate learning with the firsthand experience of local life and in the social and political processes of understanding and shaping what happens where they live (Gruenewald, 2008).

Place-Conscious Education (PCE) utilizes a critical lens to frame education, pedagogy, and learning specifically centered on place. In this way, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experiences of students and teachers, and place is re-conceptualized so that place matters to students, teachers, and community members in more tangible ways (Gruenewald, 2008). PCE works against the isolation of school discourses and practices such as those mentioned above and aims to enlist teachers and students in the first-hand experience of local life and in the critical process of understanding and shaping what happens there (Gruenewald, 2008; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010; Somerville, 2010).

John Dewey and other progressives advocated in the early 20th century for incorporating students' experience of particular communities and places into learning, but "the tendency toward centralization and standardization in the broader society marginalized their perspective and practices they advocated" (Gruenewald & Smith, 2010, p. 1). The push toward centralization and standardization is again prominent in education and PCE is an approach that connects student knowledge with learning and standards that are already in place in education. PCE does not necessarily push against standardization. PCE can be a method for incorporating standards and rigorous learning with local knowledge while making schooling more connected to students' lived experiences. High standards for learning can actually be enhanced with the use of PCE because students' engagement increases with a connection between their lives outside of school and what they are learning. Critical thinking skills are similarly enhanced by PCE and the connections between school and community. Gruenewald (2003) proposes that a

place-conscious framework measuring student achievement can assess the places in which we live in relation to the pedagogical impact of places in and outside of school.

The challenge for educators is to recognize that no matter where they are, no matter the neighborhood, math, science, literature, art, history, and culture surround them and their schools (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006). Resources for learning abound in every community and often these resources are not included in traditional schooling because they are not on standardized tests.

The beauty of place-based education is that it cannot only serve as a vehicle for learning school subjects, but also give students an opportunity to develop inter- and intrapersonal intelligence, as they work with one another and discover something about the hardships they share living in America's passed-over urban places. (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006, p.274)

A connection between students' lived experiences and learning is not a new initiative; however, what PCE does is frame a more reciprocal relationship between community and school. According to Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzales (1992) students' "funds of knowledge" is a connection to community and the local that students already have when they enter schools. However this connection is limited because it only accounts for the knowledge that students bring to learning and not reflective of the resources for learning that can be found locally or how learning can be brought into the community. PCE accounts for students "funds of knowledge" while simultaneously utilizing local resources such as places and people as instructional resources. PCE further uses experiential learning methods to increase skills and attitudes in group dynamics, human relations, and community building to strengthen already existing curriculum (Gruenewald & Smith, 2010).

Narratives

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. ...This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that narrative inquiry in educational settings is much more than seeking out and hearing a story; it is also a method for representing and understanding experience. Place Conscious Education (PCE) is a pedagogical experience that brings community and social structures into learning and can be explored through the narratives of students and teachers. According to Gruenewald (2008), PCE as a pedagogical experience allows for an exploration into how places teach us about the world and how our lives fit into the spaces that we occupy; further, these particular places have particular attributes, such as culture history, language, and political, economic, and ecological structures that can influence our identity. How do teachers and students experience PCE in their school? What is their narrative of place in a large, urban area?

Critical theorists argue that narratives are subtly persuasive; functioning coercively as a conservative social forces to bind belief and action to dominant power structures and established institutional forms (McEwan, 1997. p. 87).

However, stories can also be said to be counter narratives. They accomplish this work by retelling the story of tradition which for PCE can be such a way of retelling or pushing back against traditional pedagogies in school that emphasize standardization and do not have a place for place. PCE is thus naming a pedagogical strategy whereas narrative inquiry is a method with which to explore that pedagogical strategy through

experience. This exploration of PCE occurs by experiencing students and teachers constructing their own understandings of PCE in the naturally occurring narratives in the context of schooling.

Similarly, Phillips and Hardy (2002) state that discourse analysis methods provide well-developed approaches for understanding the social world and the meaning it has for people while focusing attention on the processes whereby the social world is constructed and maintained. “With an emphasis on reflexivity, discourse analysis aims to remind readers that in using language, producing texts, and drawing on discourses, researchers and the research community are part and parcel of the constructive effects of discourse” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.4). Therefore, both discourse analysis and narrative inquiry can find their foundations in a constructivist epistemology. These similar paradigms provide a theoretical foundation for exploring PCE in educational settings while allowing for a multivoiced approach for constructing knowledge and experiences. This dissertation will explore both narrative inquiry and discourse analysis further in order to situate educational research that combines approaches to examine PCE in a school context.

Narrative inquiry is considered both a useful method and process in research and could be employed for exploring the experiences of both teachers and students with PCE in schooling. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the study of narrative is essentially the study of the ways humans experience the world. Each school and community are distinct and because of this exploring how PCE is found in schools can inform educational research. The implication here is that research that examines PCE allows for deeper understanding and possible curricular enrichment.

The aim of this work is not to arrive at generalizations that have predictive value in relation to future events, but rather to find or create meanings in relation to past and present experience, meanings which may enrich and empower us as educators going into future experience (Luwisch, 2001, p. 135).

For my research purposes, narratives are an entry point for examining how place-conscious education is experienced by students in a small, urban charter school. By understanding how PCE is experienced by teachers and students, the possible curricular benefits can then be applied to other school settings while maintaining the understanding that PCE will look different in different contexts but essentially engage the same theoretical frameworks.

Rationale

In today's educational climate of accountability and standardized testing, teaching and learning are being pushed into a one-size-fits-all classification and removed from the lived experiences of students and teachers. Common Core Standards and similar reform efforts that have been developed to structure learning no matter what state that it occurs in sterilizes learning and assumes that places outside of the classroom do not belong within the curriculum. However, there is a small movement in education that traces its roots in environmental education, which pushes against this sterilization of learning and situates place as a position of learning. Hyry-Beihammer & Autti (2013) poignantly states that we live and die in places, we relate to others in places, and argues that the very foundation of our being can be found in place and is therefore very relevant to learning and schooling.

PCE is often situated in rural learning contexts with rural or environmental community partners; however, little work has been done to connect urban education with

PCE. This is not to suggest that rural learning and education does not need further research; rural contexts often are left out of national conversations and research on education. Tolbert and Theobald (2006) provide examples of place-based education occurring in urban contexts and illustrate how students' are able to connect their school experiences with lived experiences outside of education; however, this is one of few. Gruenewald (2008) further suggests that educational research and practice often suggest the benefits of building learning communities, but the significance of the relationship between education and local space remains under-theorized and underdeveloped. This is especially true for urban contexts. The rationale for this study is to examine how PCE looks in an urban schooling setting and to explore how students perceive this learning.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Place-Conscious Education

Place-based education immerses students in local heritage, culture, landscapes, opportunities, and experiences as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects (The Benefits of Place-Education. 2010. p.2).

The theoretical foundation of Place-Conscious Education (PCE) began with Place-Based Education (PBE). PBE is an umbrella term for a variety of educational practices and purposes, including environmental education, experiential education, inquiry-based learning, service learning and many more. Sobel (2004), a prominent scholar in PBE theory states that PBE is enacted when students, teachers, and community members utilize the social, cultural, and environmental attributes in which they live as a foundation for learning. PBE is a method for connecting learning that occurs in schools to the community, culture, and world that is outside of the school walls with students and their lived experiences.

To begin with, it is important to demarcate what exactly is “place” in place-based education. Buell (2001) contends that the concept of place has three dimensions:

physical or environmental, social perception or construction, and individual meaning.

In other words, place does not only refer to physical landscapes or landmarks, buildings, towns, cities, and ecologies; place is also differentiated from space by the meanings it signifies for people (individual emotional bonds, positive and negative) and societies. (social constructions, positive and negative) (as cited in Jayanandhan, 2009, p.106)

PBE is also conceptualized as an approach to teaching and learning that connects to the local place and enables students to explore and experience. According to

Gruenewald (2003), one of PBE preeminent critical scholars, PBE is the process of utilizing the local community and environment as a starting point for all learning, to teach concepts in subjects such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and across the curriculum (Jayanandhal, 2009). Other scholars such as Haymes (1995) extend the connection between place and learning to not only ecology and community but also to social struggles and inequality (as cited in Jayanandhal, 2009). Somerville (2010) presents place as both a specific, local location and a metaphysical imagination, both of which provide an alternative lens through which to construct knowledge, experience, and the world. Finally, Taylor (2013) conceptualizes the meaning of place as it is experienced by individuals and groups and not merely location.

Correspondingly, Place-Conscious Education (PCE) utilizes a critical lens to frame education, pedagogy, and learning centered on place. In this way, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experiences of students and teachers, and place is re-conceptualized so that place matters to students, teachers, and community members in tangible ways (Gruenewald, 2008). PCE works against the isolation of school discourses and practices and aims to enlist teachers and students in the first-hand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there (Gruenewald, 2003a; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010; Somerville, 2010).

According to Somerville (2010) and Ball and Lai (2006) a genealogy of place based, or place conscious education, begins with the liberal ecohumanist tradition of Wendell Berry. Similarly, the roots of this educational movement can be found in environmental and science education that moved beyond the classroom to explore the

natural surroundings. PCE moves beyond environmental education to include both built and natural structures, political and social constructs, and historical and cultural influences. This includes the history, folk culture, social problems, economics, and the aesthetics of the community and its environment (Sobel, 2004). Other educational theorists and philosophers, such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, have connected the importance of place and the students' lived experiences with schooling. Dewey located learning in the local; in places like the household and the neighborhood or community (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). Dewey (1938) proposed that students would learn, "not through accumulating tested propositions about the objective world, but through participation in social practices, by assuming social roles, by becoming familiar with exemplary narratives and with typical characters who illustrate a variety of patterns of behavior" (as cited in Haas & Nachtigal, 1998. p. 4). Similarly, Freire (2000) positioned learning as a dialogic relationship between the learner and the world and an awakening of consciousness. Both of these theorists contribute to a sound theoretical foundation of PCE.

Philosophical and Theoretical foundations of PCE

Education in the United States has been historically rooted in teacher-centered pedagogical practices that present learning detached from the students' lived experiences and the actual places lived in. Haas & Nachtigal (2001) propose that PCE frames the role of public educational institutions, "to help young people claim their identities as inhabitants of a particular place" (p. 10). Two educational theorists that conceptualize learning in a manner consistent with the role of education as proposed in PCE are John

Dewey and Paulo Freire. The educational philosophies advocated by these theorists promote learning that is connected to students and the community while simultaneously encouraging students to be active, participating citizens.

John Dewey's Philosophy and PCE

John Dewey was a philosopher and education reformer that attached a great importance to experiential forms of learning, such as nature studies, that directly connect to the lives, cultures, and interests of young people and their communities (McInerney, P., Smyth, J., & Down, B., 2011). In Dewey's (2012) influential work *Democracy and Education*, he highlights the place of experience in education which was essentially linking understanding to doing and being (p. 73). Dewey further states that the "reward of learning is continued capacity for growth" (p. 53). It is these connections that make Dewey's conceptions of learning and education so fundamental in PCE.

According to Jayanandhan (2009) three of Dewey's central tenets are especially significant in PCE: 1) environment, 2) experience, and 3) democracy. These tenets further connect PBE and critical pedagogy and meld the two into Place-Conscious Education (PCE); learning from a place and to be in a place is connected with democratic education and an exploration of power dynamics using a critical lens.

PCE arose from globalization and a responsive backlash for a new "localism" that is inherently political in that it seeks to make more explicit the connections between global capitalism and the devastating impact of exploitation and cultural oppression on local communities (Itin, 1999). Although most often environment is referred to as a topic

or position of study in PCE, Dewey's conception of environment relates to the individual and learning:

Dewey's discussion of environment occurs in the context of his assertion that it is impossible to directly "teach" something to a person; instead, one must alter the conditions of his or her environment so that learning is most likely to occur. (Jayanandhan, 2009, p. 106)

The assertion here is describing Dewey's suggestion that the learning environment is an important consideration in education. As suggested earlier, Dewey (2012) was a proponent of connecting learning with the community/environment in order to make explicit how schooling and lived experiences can be combined for the benefit of the learner (p. 78). The environment in which learning occurs is broadened from Dewey's conceptualization to include not only the ecological setting or the community, but also how the individual interacts with their surroundings and those aspects of their surroundings that are important (Jayanandhan, 2009; Smith, 2002a). Similarly Sobel (2004) explains that PCE "is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum" (p. 11). Sobel (2004) further states that PCE emphasizes hands-on, real world learning experiences just as Dewey suggests and that learning can occur between the individual and their environment. It is this connection between schooling and the community that can create a learning experience that is further essential to Dewey's and PCE's educational theory.

Experience is a key tenet in Dewey's philosophy and also in PCE because the learning involves interaction between the student, the teacher, and the learning

environment. It is the real world experiences and the interactions between learning and community or environment that PCE accentuates as central to learning across the curriculum. Similarly, Itin (1999) describes experiential education as carefully chosen experiences supported by,

reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results through actively posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibilities, being creative, constructing meaning, and integrating previously developed knowledge. (p. 93)

PCE further expands the theoretical concept of experience in learning by positioning learners as individually or socially engaged in an intellectual, political, and cultural environment where new information is connected to previous experience. According to Barnhardt (2010) a pedagogy of place or PCE, shifts the emphasis of teaching *about* subjects such as culture, language, or ecology to teaching *through* these subjects by way of experience. “An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his *environment...*”(emphasis added) (Dewey, 1938, “Criteria for Experience”).

Dewey (1938) formed a theory of experience which he termed “experiential continuum” that further elucidates the role of experience in PCE. The principle of continuity of experience that Dewey (1938) detailed suggests that “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (“Criteria for Experience”, 1938). Learning is suggested to occur when an individual experiences new knowledge and incorporates it with prior knowledge and then applies learned information to future applications. Dewey

(1938) also delineates experiences; not all experiences are equal in terms of learning. Experiences that are a moving force for learning should arouse curiosity, strengthen initiative, and construct a desire; further, it is the business of the educator to channel the direction of experience (Dewey, 1938). Essentially, Dewey advocates for experiences in education that connect the students' "funds of knowledge" to new information in a meaningful manner that will influence learning (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D. & Gonzalez, N., 1992). PCE meets this challenge in that it increases student engagement through "multidisciplinary, experiential, and intergenerational learning so that education might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places" that have meaning and in which people actually live (Stevenson, 2014, p. 354).

The last tenet of Dewey's educational philosophy that is important in PCE concerns democratic education and citizen participation. Barnhardt (2010) argues, as did Dewey, that young people not only live in a place and should not be treated as potential future citizens but as current citizens. Dewey (2012) proposes in *Democracy and Education* that a principle of a democratic education is the free interchange of knowledge and that knowledge can be the method by which one's experience is made available in giving meaning to another (p.10). Dewey proposed in *The School and Society* (1900) that every school should be,

...an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious (as cited by PBS).

Jayanandhan (2009) further asserts that Dewey's philosophy concerning democracy and education is important because the learner will become a participating citizen for the benefit of both the individual and society. Itin (1999) echoes this notion of participating citizen by stating that Dewey, along with Freire, was concerned with increasing the capabilities of the individual to actively participate in the democratic process, have political awareness, and to take action. By framing place-based education with a critical lens, or PCE, learning also becomes more democratic by focusing attention on how economic and political decisions can impact a particular place (Gruenewald, 2008; Stevenson, 2008; Saltmarsh, 1996). PCE invests young people with a sense of agency in their own learning and in the places they live and learn, acknowledges them as both producers and consumers of knowledge, enriches their learning by making it hands-on and connected to community, and provides them with the relevant knowledge and experience to actively participate in democratic processes and devise solutions to social and environmental problems (Gruenewald, 2003; Gruenewald, 2008; McInerney, et al., 2011; Smith, 2002a).

In summary, John Dewey's educational philosophy has influenced thinking about learning and schooling for decades. PCE, although a more recent conceptualization of learning and schooling, corresponds with three important tenets of Dewey's philosophy on education. In PCE, "educators recognize that we are *of* places as much as we are *in* them" (Somerville, Bronwyn, Power, Gannon & de Carteret, 2011). This understanding that positions both being of and in a place highlights democratic learning that helps students develop stronger ties to their community, increases student achievement,

enhances students' appreciation for the world around them, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens (Sobel, 2004). Dewey's philosophy on learning and education are fundamental characteristics in PCE; however, it is the heightened commitment to participating as citizens that is highlighted by another educational philosopher and activist, Paulo Freire.

Paulo Freire and *Conscientization*

According to Fukuda, Sam, and Wang (2010), from a theoretical perspective place-conscious educational approaches to learning support the work of Paulo Freire and John Dewey because by utilizing the local community and environment, PCE provides students with opportunities to engage in learning experiences that allow them to become creators of knowledge instead of just consumers. Paulo Freire was an educational activist and philosopher concerned with disseminating anti-oppressive education and learning that is liberating. Freire's philosophy is framed by both critical and social justice approaches to learning and schooling.

One of Freire's pivotal contributions to education and learning that is significant in PCE is his concept of *conscientization* which is the process of developing a critical awareness through reflection and action (Freire, 2010, p. 72). This critical consciousness or *conscientization* is reflected in PCE through the attention given to studying about and acting on locality as a means for understanding the importance of collective solutions, contextualizing academic education in meaningful situations and promoting a balance between reflection and action (Arenas, 1999). Freire conceptualized teaching and learning in this manner as dialogical which is a process of learning and knowing that

invariably involves the lived experience and the world for knowing (Freire, 2010).

Finally, Freire's conceptualization of traditional schooling is central to PCE because both push against the "banking" conception of learning and instead position individuals and knowledge consumers and creators.

According to Gruenewald (2003) the purpose of critical education framed by Freire's philosophy is to engage learners in *conscientization*. Just as Somerville, et al. (2011) position PCE as a learning in which students come to appreciate that we are *of* places as much as we are *in* them, Freire begins his analysis of *conscientization* with a "critical comprehension of man [and woman] as beings who exists *in* and *with* the world" (Freire, 2000, p. 39). Reflection is primary in the individual's existing in and with the world (Freire, 2000). Freire further advocates for "reading the world" which precedes reading the word (Gruenewald, 2003). Reading the word is the process of attaining *conscientization* and redefines traditional notions of print-based literacy so that the texts to be decoded include their own situated experiences and knowledge (Gruenewald, 2003a). For Freire (2000), reading the world can be described as developing a critical lens towards understanding and praxis. According to Freire (2000), congruently occurring is reading of the word and reading of the world and these two literacies intertwine and foster *conscientization*. McInerney, et al., (2009) similarly describe PCE as a lens through which people begin to make sense of themselves and the world around them while forming relationships and social networks, and developing a sense of community and learning to live with others. PCE combines Freire's concept of *conscientization* with a

pedagogy that connects learners with their community and local knowledge while simultaneously encouraging praxis.

PCE is often understood through the recent phenomenon of globalization; however, Freire's educational philosophy frames PCE locally. Massey (2005) conceptualizes globalization as a frequent and powerful term used in humanity's understanding of both geological and sociological boundaries; whereas, PCE employs learning and action, as conceptualized by Freire, in the local. Globalization depicts a world of free flow and instead of isolated identities, an understanding of the spatial as relational through connections (Massey, 2005). "The very word 'globalisation' implies a recognition of spatiality" (Massey, 2005, p. 81). Wiseman (1999) states that widely geographically dispersed places become more culturally and economically convergent through a globalized lens and this is yet another recognition of spatiality (as cited by Stevenson, 2008). This perception of globalization in terms of free space is a powerful rhetoric that is also overwhelmingly a political discourse. One of PCE's strengths is that it adapts to the unique characteristics of a place and utilizes those characteristics as a curricular foundation (Smith, 2002a). This is not to say that PCE pushes back against globalization, but rather that it conceptualizes unique places in a globalized world. Gruenewald (2008) describes the concept of place in PCE as one that foregrounds a narrative of local and regional politics while being attuned to the unique particularities of where people actually live, and that it is connected to global trends that impact local places. Smith (2007) draws upon *conscientization* and argues that PCE works to

empower students to investigate their assumptions about the world and question and challenge perspectives that harm both their lives and the lives of others.

In more recent times, PBE [PCE] has become part of a broader movement that has arisen in response to globalisation and the serious environmental issues confronting humanity. This 'new localism' has a much stronger political flavor insofar as it seeks to make more explicit the connections between global capitalism and the devastating impact of economic exploitation and cultural oppression on local communities. (McInerney et al, 2011, p. 5)

Freire was especially invested in anti-oppressive education and dialogic teaching. Dialogic education, according to Freire (2010), begins with the word and within the word are two dimensions, reflection and action. The word is used to know the world and name the world and this process is work which in turn becomes praxis (Freire, 2010). Further, Freire (2010) positions love as, "the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (p. 89). Additional foundational pieces to dialogism are faith, humility, hope, and critical thinking.

This framing of dialogical learning is paralleled in PCE in that students are incited to connect their knowledge through experience with new understandings and it is this process that is dialogic. PCE encourages a dialogic approach to learning in all subjects and in conjunction with the community and the people that live there. Stevenson (2008) describes the construction of healthy identities in relation to both self and community as a challenge in education, which can be met by PCE and dialogic learning. Clark (2008) similarly situates dialogic learning and place-conscious learning approaches together because PCE seeks "to take advantage of the strong affinity people have for their communities and to accomplish ecological and cultural literacy as well as a range of conservation and community stewardship objects" (p. 3). Just as dialogical learning

encompasses action and reflection, so does PCE; both action and reflection in PCE enact praxis.

The final educational concept that Freire expounded on that relates to PCE is the “banking” concept of learning. “Banking” education positions the student not as a creator of knowledge but merely as a receptacle for information from the teacher and/or curriculum. “This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (Freire, 2010, p. 72). “Banking” education is oppositional to dialogic learning due to the fact that banking relies on the teacher filling the student with knowledge and not learning themselves.

Conversely, in dialogic learning, and PCE by extension, both students and teachers explore learning together through place. This learning together is what Clark (2008) describes as a values-driven approach to learning. A value-driven approach is accomplished in PCE through the integration” of civic engagement opportunities in place-based curricula, learning is connected to action: students and citizens engage together in the civic life of their communities” (Clark, 2008, p. 3). It is important to note that in a banking system of education, learning is supposed to occur between teacher and student; however, PCE situates the learner as knowledge creator and involves community members which makes the school walls more permeable (Smith, 2002a). Further, PCE is dialogic because the reflection that happens during learning then becomes action in the sense that students can play an active role in the community (Clark, 2008; Smith, 2002a, Gruenewald, 2003; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010). Therefore, PCE pushes against

traditional schooling's banking method of education and embraces a dialogic approach to learning by reconnecting rather than separating students from the world and their communities. This connection, in turn, serves both individuals and communities by helping individuals to experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the praxis and contributions of their members (Smith, 2002a).

Freire's educational philosophy and theories frame PCE with a critical, dialogic approach to teaching and learning. *Conscientization* conceptualizes a learning process for interacting with an individual's learning environment and the world. PCE encourages students and educators to learn to "exist *in* and *with* the world" while employing reflection and action. According to Sobel (2004) action and reflection are accentuated across all subjects in PCE by emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences. This approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their communities, enhances students understanding and appreciation of the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Further, "community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the *active* [emphasis added] engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources in the life of the school" (Sobel, 2004, p.11). This description of PCE exemplifies reflection and action that develops from *conscientization* and illustrates a dialogic approach to learning instead of the traditional banking method.

John Dewey and Paulo Freire are important critical educational theorists and philosophers that provide theoretical frameworks and epistemological foundations for

examining and understanding the significance of PCE in education. Dewey's conceptions of environment, experience, and democracy in educational contexts provide important dimensions through which to understand a theory of learning based in PCE. Freire conceptualized education as learning to live in the world and with the world. Freire's *conscientization* positions learning as reflection and action that will lead to praxis. Finally, Gruenewald (2008) asserts that, "Dewey, Freire, and other educational philosophers often warn against cutting schooling off from the pulse of cultural life and experience", yet our schools, it can be argued, continue to do just that (p. 625).

PCE and Schooling

There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as resources. A system of education based upon the necessary connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things into account. (Dewey, Education and Experience, 1938)

PCE provides a curricular framework through which students are able to learn through their own experiences and become not only knowledge creators but knowledge consumers (McInerney, et al, 2011; Smith, 2002a). However, PCE objects to some characteristics of traditional education and argues that we, as educators, students, and citizens, can do better. The first characteristic of traditional education that PCE pushes against is the fact that learning happens in an institutional setting removed from the surrounding environments and communities; however, PCE can make the walls of these institutions more permeable. Students in traditional educational settings that do not feel their "funds of knowledge" are valued or present in schools may feel alienated and unmotivated; which is a second characteristic of traditional schooling that PCE strives to

remedy (Moll et al, 1992). Finally, while national curricular ideas and high stakes, standardized tests dominate educational dialogue, PCE offers an alternative approach that will make learning viable in competitive market that education has now become and while remaining meaningful for the students, teachers, and the communities in which learning occurs (Kemp, 2006).

Over a century ago, Dewey advocated for the adoption of progressive educational practices that would integrate schools and their communities and would induct students into patterns of civic engagement essential to the maintenance of democratic institutions (Smith, 2007). However, this vision of schools and communities collaborating together to educate students has remained largely unfulfilled. Arena (1999) explains that as modern schooling spread from the 19th century onwards that it carried with it characteristics such as a proclivity for in-door learning experiences, a fragmented curriculum, and a general approach to the social and natural sciences that had little connection to the students' lived experiences. It is this tradition of schooling that PCE counters by creating learning contexts both inside and outside of the school (Woodhouse, 2001). Smith (2007) further states that, "the proponents of PCE have been striving to make the boundaries between schools and their environs more permeable by directing at least part of students' school experiences to local phenomena ranging from culture and politics to environmental concerns and the economy" (p. 190). Correspondingly, Powers (2004) suggests that the proponents of PCE share a broader hope that curriculum that embraces place can "tear down" the school walls so that the community becomes integral to all learning and subjects and that the schools becomes a place that is open and inviting to community

members. Somerville (2010) states that PCE has the potential to offer alternative discourses in education; “the discourses of Indigenous knowledge about place are one site for the intersection of Western and non-Western epistemologies” (p. 331). These alternative discourses effectively bridge community and school and thereby connecting students’ school experiences to their lived experiences, PCE creates participating, active learners as opposed to alienating individuals.

A second characteristic of traditional schooling that PCE counters is an unconnected curriculum from the lived experiences of students. By teaching a curriculum that has not any connection to students’ lives outside of school, traditional school can be described as alienating because of a lack of relevance. These students remain on the margins and feel alienated in part because of their unwillingness to accept the pronouncements of teachers and curriculum about what is or is not valuable knowledge (Smith, 2002a). Smith and Sobel (2010) relate this alienation back to Dewey and his educational approach to recover the relationship between formal schooling, the individual, and the community. Thompson (2006) states that PCE responds to alienation because it is heavily influenced by the idea of local and family knowledge, and when educators take advantage of these knowledges, then a bridge is built between the mandated curriculum and the students’ lived experiences (as cited in Stevenson, 2008).

Fly (n.d.) suggests that PCE can diminish the disconnect between students and school by creating opportunities for students to think or inquire independently, collect, analyze, and critique information, address community opportunities and concerns, and create knowledge and innovation. Conversely, Ball and Lai (2006) suggest that students

can be resistant to PCE in that they may not have an interest in learning about the local or do not live in the communities where their schools are located. Gruenewald (2008) connects PCE with a students' lived experience by asserting that "not only is our experience of place mediated by culture, education, and personal experience, but places themselves are products of culture" (p. 626). Therefore, even if students learn about communities that they do not live in they are still able to actively engage in learning and connect their own culture and prior knowledge. Problematic to PCE is the current reform efforts in education that continue the separation of the students' lived experiences and learning. Smith (2002a) echoes that the disconnect between students' lived experiences and school learning has only been exacerbated by our national preoccupation with standardized curriculum and testing. "This idea [of PCE] is radical because current educational discourses seek to standardize the experience of students from diverse geographical and cultural places so that they may compete in the global economy" and PCE provides an alternative (Ball & Lai, 2006, p. 273).

Currently, the push for standardized curriculum that measures student and teacher efficiency through standardized testing is a proposed panacea for the "achievement gap" and the perception that the United States educationally lags behind other industrial countries. Reform efforts, the emphasis on standardization and the push for teachers and students to work toward uniform and segregated skills, tend to reinforce the assumption that the only academic achievement that matters is individualistic, quantifiable, and is statistically comparable (Gruenewald, 2008). "By focusing more and more on content that has measurable effects on test scores, we are eliminating the richness of our learning

environments and sterilizing learning, making it no fun at all and defeating our overarching purpose to improve learning and create lifelong learners” (Chin, 2001, p.3).

Reform of this nature has taken center stage in education and often replaces other curricular endeavors that connect to students’ lived experiences and make learning “fun” and engaging. Gruenewald (2003) suggests that a critical pedagogy of place (PCE) is thus a necessary response against educational reform policies and practices that disregard places and the lived experiences of the students and leave unexamined the assumptions underlying these policies. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the characteristics of PCE and any benefits to academic achievement this learning theory affords.

Characteristics and Benefits of PCE

Understanding a pedagogy of place is understanding the purpose of education.
(Arena, 1999, p. 5)

The theoretical and philosophical foundations of PCE are found in the works of John Dewey and Paulo Freire; however, a fuller exploration of contemporary scholars of PCE is necessary to understand how it advances current educational practices. Characteristics or attributes of PCE are first explored in order to better conceptualize the academic benefits. Then, actual advantages for the student, the school, and the community are explained to further illustrate how PCE is beneficial. It is important to note that this approach can be deemed radical. As Gruenewald (2003) suggests a critical pedagogy of place deepens the challenge of education by bringing cultural and ecological discourses and politics into the center of learning.

According to many scholars concerned with PCE there are five essential characteristics that are fundamental. First, place is a central tenet in learning; place is

understood in the sense of environmental or physical settings, social constructions, and individual meanings of place (Clark, 2008; Smith, 2002a). Second, PCE is inherently multidisciplinary and prepares students to become active, participating citizens (Fly, n.d.; Smith & Sobel 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Third, as described earlier in relation to Dewey, PCE is experiential and may include a participatory action or service learning component (Clark, 2008; Smith & Sobel 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Fourth, the underlying educational philosophy of PCE positions students as both creators and consumers of knowledge while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between teacher and student (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith & Sobel 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Lastly, PCE connects place with self and community (Smith & Sobel 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). These essential characteristics frame PCE in a manner that not only develops human capital but also strengthens community ties while supporting environmental quality.

Sobel (2004) similarly situates three elements of PCE that are mutually beneficial to students, schools, and communities: academic achievement, social capital, and environmental quality. PCE boosts student academic achievement in classrooms and standardized tests (Clark, 2008; “Student gains from”, 2007). Students that learn from using the environment as an integrating context score higher on standardized tests in reading, writing, math, science and social studies (“Student gains from,” 2007). These gains are similarly reported by Semken and Freeman (2008) in a meta-analysis of 40 environment-based school programs which found significant improvement on standardized test scores in language arts, math, science, and social studies and fostered

enthusiasm for problem solving and learning. For example, students in one PCE school, “have outpaced their peers in the school district on MCAS [assessments] in math and science, suggesting a correlation between place-based education and academic performance” (*The benefits of*, 2010). Gruenewald (2008) proposes that a place-conscious framework measuring student achievement can assess the places in which we live in relation to the pedagogical impact of places in and outside of school. Seemingly, students’ academic achievement is promoted by PCE not only in the sciences but across all subject areas.

Environmental quality is realized in PCE by the connection between the environment and learning which is mutually beneficial to student academic achievement and the environment. PCE improves environmental, social, and economic vitality in communities (Clark, 2008). Similarly, McInerney et al. (2011) state that programs which encourage students to play an active role in learning about and caring for their community can be a powerful means for revitalizing natural systems and cultural patterns and traditions. The notion of students becoming cultural and environmental stewards is reflected in PCE’s multidisciplinary approach that reminds students and educators of the “need to create time and space for experiencing, exploring, and discovering places and the diversity within them” (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 638.) Arenas (1999) asserts that perhaps no other aspect of student’s lives can teach about the interdependency of social and natural systems better than the places that they inhabit and that this interdependency shapes who students are as humans. Engagement with the community and their own lived experiences can empower students and can provide an avenue for their own praxis.

Ball and Lai (2006) observe some possible obstacles faced by student when putting PCE curricular and pedagogical practices into action. First, some students are not sufficiently interested or engaged in their locale to find local learning provocative (Ball & Lai, 2006). There can be many explanations for this lack of interest and the challenge for educators is to explore the extent to which they can generate interest in this type of educational experience. Second, many students resist critical pedagogy's emphasis on the politics of socioecological transformations, culture, and politics in general (Ball & Lai, 2006). The caution suggested by Ball and Lai (2006) is that students may perceive the goals of the critical educator for transformation as running counter to their own desires or notions of truth. The resistance to PCE can be found in a variety of settings, however...

This is perhaps more likely in certain rural areas, suburban sprawl neighborhoods, and urban 'ghettos' where inhabitants have internalized the notion that their place isn't important enough to matter. It is also probable in places where many inhabitants are transients. Furthermore, the very hegemonies that are complicit in the marginalization of place(s) can play an important role in constituting the lack of internal persuasiveness of transformative pedagogies (Ball & Lai, 2006, p. 272-273).

A possible response to student resistance can be to encourage empower students through praxis. PCE encourages social capital development by inviting students to become active citizens both in school and in communities. Clark (2008) found from the results of a comprehensive study that PCE fosters students' connection to place and encourages active engagement. Students participating in PCE learning opportunities demonstrate more responsible behavior in their school and in the community; additionally, educators report reduced discipline and classroom management problems and an increase in attendance rates ("Student gains from," 2007). This active participation

occurs not just in the community but has also been noted in classrooms. One study of 400 Florida schools that implemented various forms of PCE found significant improvement in achievement motivation in classrooms and critical thinking skills and a disposition towards critical thinking (Semken & Freeman, 2008; "Student gains from," 2007). Similarly, Smith and Sobel (2010) noted that students involved in PCE can develop a peer culture in school that values academic achievement which can illustrate another form of active citizenship and social capital, peer group participation.

Summary

Project-focused and inherently tailored by local people to local realities, place-based education is equally relevant in small towns and big cities, equally effective for kindergarteners and high school students. (The Benefits of Place-Education, 2010)

Place-Conscious Education is an important, although small, movement in education that supports relevancy in learning; education and schooling become relevant in PCE because instead of sterile, standardized curriculum, students are engaged in their environment, culture, history, and community (Azano, 2011; Chin, 2001). By its very nature, PCE can be conceptualized as a radical re-envisioning of schooling due to the fact that it introduces a "new localism" to learning in an already overly-crowded curriculum (Arena, 1999). Further, studying about and acting on locality is a vital means for understanding the importance of collective solutions, contextualizing academic education in meaningful situations, and promoting a balance between reflection and activism (Arena, 1999, p. 2). According to Graham (2007), critical place-based pedagogy creates a rigorous framework that combines an ecological and environmental focus to learning

with a critical theory lens. Therefore, PCE endeavors to provide a possible solution to the question: how can students be expected to be global, multicultural citizens if they have at best a mediocre understanding of their culture and community?

PCE is often situated in rural learning contexts with rural or environmental community partners; however, little work has been done to connect urban education with PCE. This is not to propose that rural learning and education do not need further research; but to advocate for PCE in urban contexts and to connect learning to urban communities and their citizens. Further, research is needed into urban schools that are using PCE to connect students and learning to the community in order to better understand how students respond.

Consequently, the research I propose for my dissertation would move in this direction and would expand PCE theory into urban educational contexts. Tolbert and Theobald (2006) provide examples of place-based education (PCE) occurring in urban contexts and illustrate how students' are able to connect their school experiences with lived experiences outside of education. Implications of this research is to discover educators can recognize that no matter where they are, no matter the neighborhood, math, science, literature, art, history, and culture surround them and their schools (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006).

The beauty of place-based education is that it can not only serve as a vehicle for learning school subjects, but also give students an opportunity to develop inter- and intrapersonal intelligence, as they work with one another and discover something about the hardships they share living in America's passed-over urban places. (Tolbert & Theobald, 2006, p.274)

Gruenewald (2003) further suggests that educational research and practice often suggest the benefits of building learning communities, but the significance of the relationship between education and local space remains under-theorized and underdeveloped. This is especially true for urban contexts.

Diden (n.d.) maintains that PCE approach to teaching and learning stands as a bridge between the progressive educators of the past, such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, and schooling today. According to Nespor (2008), place-conscious education challenges the conventional notions of diversity in education which too often take for granted the legitimacy and value of education that disregards places in all their particularity and uniqueness. Similarly, Dolce and Morales-Vasquez (2003) suggest that we can encourage our students to join us in renewing and strengthening our communities by developing a sense of place that advocates for active participation. Most importantly, PCE can encourage students to care about learning by demonstrating to them that the communities that live in and care for are places where learning can occur.

Chapter 3
Research Methodology
Case Study and Narrative Inquiry

Merriam (1998) provides the most useful and succinct definition of case study as intensive description and analyses of a single unit or bounded system (p.19). An important guiding principle of case study is that if the phenomenon that is being studied is not intrinsically bound, then it is not a case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). The bounded system, or case, to be studied is selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). This study chose the 7th grade English Language Arts classroom as the bounded system.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this case study were concerned with what PCE looks like in a language arts classroom. First, how is PCE used in a language arts classroom that is also project based? In what ways are classroom learning and the community connected? And second, how is PCE perceived by students and their teacher in a language arts classroom? How does PCE make the students and their teacher feel about learning?

Participants

To begin with, I need to note that all participants have been given pseudonyms as well as the school. PCE emphasizes connections between the classroom and the

community but in order to maintain the privacy of participants, the community will not be identified.

This study occurred in a 7th grade English Language Arts classroom. There was one teacher, Anne, who had 11 years of experience teaching. She situated her pedagogy in social justice and engaged her students in learning that was connected to their lived experiences. During the (2014-2015) school year there were 16 boys and 7 girls in the 7th grade English Language Arts class; 6 of the female students and 6 of the male students participated along with their teacher for a total of 13 participants (n=13). This school provides a caring environment for students that identify as LGBTQ; therefore, I did ask the teacher about proper pronoun use for all participants in order to be sensitive to participants' identity. The teacher stated that to her knowledge no students were questioning and that traditional pronoun use was acceptable. Informed consent was obtained from parents (See Appendix G) and informed assent (See Appendix F) was obtained from students. Consent was also obtained from Anne (See Appendix E). Consent and Assent forms in languages other than English were offered but not needed.

Approval for the study was also obtained from the entire staff at Carter. This school was not a typical top-down hierarchy, but instead a teacher cooperative. Below is an explanation of a teacher cooperative school from the school's website:

Carter continues to use a teacher co-op governance model. We have utilized a teacher co-op since Carter began, but we have fine-tuned the system over the seven years we have been in operation. There are two important components of this model. One is that all people on the teaching staff have equal authority in all decision-making situations. No one person, or group of persons, can make a decision without the consensus of

the entire staff. While this is sometimes difficult and time consuming, it does give all staff a feeling of empowerment which translates into a great amount of ownership for our program. The second component is that all teaching staff members assume administrative duties. (Carter Website, 7 Sept 2014)

Setting. Carter School is an independent public charter school that was established in 2001. Carter school is a small, urban school that has served grades 7-12 until the last school year (2013-2014) when they added a 6th grade to the middle school. This school is located in an industrial part of a large, urban city. There is a small parking lot for staff surrounded by large warehouse buildings located on the same block. Students that attend Carter tend to use public transportation, either the bus or light rail. In the front of the school, there is a small, student-run chicken coop, a garden, and some art projects within the garden like a metal bike frame and stepping stones with various colored tiles imbedded. There is a bike rack in the front of the school that is painted as a rainbow, but not many students/staff are able to bike to school, this is a commuter school.

Upon entering the building, there is a wall that students have painted that provide a space for student projects to be displayed. There is also a display case with student art projects directly to the right of the front entrance. Posted along the walls of the front desk where guests are required to sign in are signs for various student clubs; the most colorful sign is the one for the LGBTQ & Ally. Carter school is very open and supportive of LGBTQ students and their needs.

Carter School is a learning environment that fosters individual growth within the context of a small nurturing community. Our students actively participate in creating an educational plan that is personally meaningful and relevant to their individual life goals. (Carter website, 17 July 2013)

Further, Carter draws upon the greater community for mentors to help students identify their intellectual passions, develop their individual learning styles, teach real-life skills, offer apprenticeship opportunities, and pinpoint potential contributions to their community (Carter Website, 7 Sept. 2014). Although Carter is a small school, it is situated in a large, urban area with a population of 295,000.

A unique characteristic of Carter is its use of project-based learning. According to Carter's website

Carter School features a curriculum built around individualized learning plans, student-initiated projects, small student-centered seminars, public presentations and multidisciplinary senior thesis projects. Project-based learning has replaced conventionally structured classes and grade levels. A post-secondary enrollment option will enable Avalon students to pursue college level courses and credit through enrollment in local colleges and universities. (Carter Website, 7 Sept 2014)

Project based learning in this sense allows for students to connect their lived experiences and interests to the curriculum that they are learning. Project based learning is an excellent avenue for implementing PCE into educational settings. Although project based learning is not an object of study for this research it will be taken into consideration as an influence for PCE.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

According to Patton (1990)

Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single sources of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective... By using a

combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and crosscheck findings. (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 137)

Data for this study reflected this recommendation and was collected in three different forms: interviews, artifact collection, and observation. A majority of data was obtained through 8 months of observing 3 classes a week; this class only met 4 times a week Tuesday-Friday and I had other obligations on Friday.

Initial observations were used to orient the researcher to an English Language Arts Classroom that uses project based learning and has a social justice focus. Observational protocols were not utilized during this study; however, field notes were recorded during all observations and were later coded. Some classes were video recorded because those classes were determined to have discourses of interest that I later wanted to transcribe and code.

Classes were video recorded because of the topics of conversation happening in the class. The decision to video record was either made at the beginning of class or beforehand. On 11/4/14, I began my observation by starting to video record class because the conversation between the students and the teacher centered on the seriousness of World War II. Students and teachers were sharing ideas and this particular class became a focus in this study because of a story that one student, Rebeka shares which is described in detail in the next chapter. Later, the class was going to perform a skit on the Greek gods and I determined beforehand that I should record this class in order to be able to analyze the large amount of data provided later. The decision to video record was made

based on topic of study for that particular class and to allow the researcher further analysis opportunities.

Physical artifacts from the students and their teacher were collected with permission. Student learning artifacts that were deemed of interest to my study were collected throughout the study. The artifacts were chosen because I hypothesized that they would provide evidentiary warrant for the assertions I wanted to make (Erikson, 1986). These artifacts provided examples of students making connections between the learning occurring in the class and their lived experiences or the local communities. For example, one student, Eva, wrote a four page paper on the Hmong in and this paper was one of the artifacts that was used as evidence of the assertion that the curriculum was directly connected to the local community.

Merriam (1998) suggests that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information and this was true for this study as well because they allowed the researcher to investigate perceptions of PCE through narrative. Focused interviews were conducted with select students and Anne. Students were selected because their work reflected PCE characteristics and I wanted to know more about the learning connected with this work. These interviews were open-ended with some guiding questions derived from literature reviewed and observations made during the study. The first student interviewed, Rebeka, had shared a story in class about her familial connections to World War II. She was then selected to be interviewed because one of the characteristics of PCE is a connection between students' lived experiences and the curriculum and Rebeka had shared her own lived experience of being Jewish. An example of a question from her

interview was, “do you think that made, what you know about your family and from your religion that that made this book more interesting?” (Interview, 12/17/14). Questions such as this enabled me to explore how students perceived learning that was connected to their lived experiences. The second student selected to be interviewed, Arianna, had participated often in class discussions concerning race and gender stereotypes. She was selected because another characteristic of PCE being explored was critical conversations in class and I wanted to know more about what she thought about these conversations. An example of a question from her interview was, “What do you think about how the Greeks stereotyped women?” (Interview, 3/18/ 15). Questions about the conversations in class enable me to further understand how the students understand the conversations. Anne build a whole unit around a book about the Hmong immigration story and she connected this unit to the Hmong in. I interviewed her because I wanted to know more about her decision making process behind designing her unit in this manner. For example one question I asked was, “Why do you feel this book is important or not for students to read?” (Interview, 4/30/15). Because PCE is a pedagogical experience that brings community and social structures into learning and can be explored through the narratives of students and teachers, this method of data collection allowed for participants to personalize their responses and to elaborate when they feel it was needed.

Data Analysis

Throughout the study data were analyzed inductively in order to sort data and examine commonalities. The purpose for using an inductive approach was to A) condense raw data into a brief, summary format; B) establish clear links between the research

questions and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and C) to develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data (Thomas, 2006, p. 237). Early in my data collection, I began looking at only direct connections between PCE and the curriculum as a filter for my data (Merriam, 1998). As my study progressed, I became started noticing specific characteristics of PCE that I was seeing in the classroom instead of just connections between PCE and the curriculum.

A first step to condensing raw data was to color code field observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents (these were always scans not originals). For field notes and interview transcripts, the color coding was done with the highlighter tool in Microsoft word. Artifact scans were physically highlighted. These initial codes provided a shorthand designation for possible themes emerging from the data (Merriam, 1998). The initial codes were PCE in discussions, PCE in artifacts, and PCE in texts. As data collection progressed, codes were further developed into categories (Merriam, 1998). “Categories are conceptual elements that ‘cover’ or span many individual examples of the category” (Merriam, 1998, 182). Eventually the categories were further developed to the characteristics of PCE that were being observed in the classroom; these characteristics were a connection between students’ lived experiences and the curriculum, critical conversations in the classroom, and deliberate connections between the curriculum and the local community. Each of these characteristics are discussed in the findings and results chapters.

During data collection and coding I used theoretical memos in order to begin rudimentary analysis (Merriam, 1998). These memos not only aided in clarifying data being collected but often times guided future data collection. An example of one memo that I wrote follows:

I need to analyze the video clip from the last class that I observed. I think that I may find some connections again between Bakhtin's notion of carnival and the serious play that the students performed while being the Greek gods on a talk show. Perhaps serious play enables students to be more comfortable in their place. Many of the students that don't talk during class normally were engaged and active during the talk show (Theoretical Memo, 2/24/15).

Once relevant concepts were identified in the data different data analysis tools were then implemented to further understand what I was seeing. The first data analysis tool used was an interactional discourse model as conceptualized by Wortham (2001). Wortham (2001) explains that interpretations of an utterance also require understanding of the interactional level of the text. Wortham was particularly useful for visually analyzing and displaying data such as when a student shares a story about her familial connections to World War II.

A second tool of data analysis came from Gee (2011) big "C" Conversations and his conception of intertextuality. The data analysis tool of Big "C" Conversations was used to explore PCE and its characteristic of using critical lens for learning. Gruenewald (2003) describes,

As in the Freirean tradition of critical praxis), the teacher's role is one of facilitating the process of reflection and action so that it is owned as much as possible by children and youth. They are not taught the process but learn its complexity through experiencing it. (p. 640)

Data was analyzed to see how these Conversations, or reflection and action, occurred in class and further how students used these Conversations to deepen their learning.

Intertextuality as a data analysis tool was used to examine students layering social languages with the texts they were learning in class.

Through analysis of intertextuality, one can investigate both the reproduction of discourses whereby no new elements are introduced and discursive change through new combinations of discourse (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 10).

This was done in order to investigate how students embodied not only the learning but the critical Conversations that were being taken up. An example of intertextuality described in chapter 5 was a class skit that students performed as Greek gods on a tabloid talk show, modeled after the Maury Povich show. The students used a narrative modeled from the tabloid talk show to explain their relationships among each other as either Greek gods or characters from Greek myths that they read in class.

The last tool of analysis to be used in this study was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, or narrative analysis as Polkinghorne (2007) describes it, is the collection of events and happenings by researchers that they then synthesize or configure by means of a plot into a story or stories. Barone (2007) suggests that because this recasting of data into storied form is more accurately described as an act of textual arrangement than of analysis, he prefers the term narrative construction. The difference in terms can be attributed to different purposes of narrative, such as data collection method, data analysis tool, or as a form of data presentation or explanation. Relatedly, Hendry (2009) states that narrative as inquiry is not just a method, but rather a process of meaning making. For example, in chapter 6 a teacher's narrative is used to make meaning of how she designed

a unit of study for the class that connected learning to the local Hmong community. Further, the narratives used in class for students to make their own connections between the text they were reading and the local community was analyzed in relation to the PCE characteristic of connections between curriculum and community.

Researcher Positionality

Some background information about my study is necessary here in order to better understand the researcher positionality in this study. During the academic year (2013-2014) I completed a small research study with the 6th grade students at Carter to explore the small learning community. This was the first year that Carter had a 6th grade and myself and another researcher were interested in how the students would form a learning community. There were 12 students in the 6th grade at this time and 7 of them participated; of those participants 4 returned for 7th grade and participated in my dissertation research. During this study I worked with Anne and three other middle school teachers while also observing students in math, science, English, and social studies. I did a group interview with 2 groups of students and also chatted with students during observations. It was because of this study that some of the returning students in the 7th grade remembered me.

Before my observations began, I went to talk to the class and get student assent. I asked the students if they knew what research is and they did because they have done it for their projects at school. We discussed why someone does research and I then told the students about what I was going to be doing in their class. At least two students said, "I remember you!" (fieldnotes, 10/1/14). I then asked what they remember about what I did

and they said they remember me being in their classes and they remembered me talking to them. I also told them that I would be doing much the same during this study but that I would also be looking at some of their work with their permission.

Due to the fact that I am a licensed English educator in the state of Montana, Anne invited me to participate in class with students. During observations I would add to discussions and help students with work. For example, when the class was discussing World War II and the human experimentation that occurred during that time, mentioned that it was because of these actions that consent, like they gave me, is now required for research. I helped students during their research time for projects and also when they were writing their papers for class; I would answer questions about topics, grammar concerns, and paper formatting.

During observations I would also interact with students socially. During one observation, when the students were finished with their work early I was able to watch a group of them play a game online. The game was called “Climb the Corporate Ladder” and the main character in the game went through different levels in an office building that had different challenges. Like in the mail room, the main character had to move the mail across the room crossing various obstacles like jumping over mail bags. It was interesting to observe students helping each other and encouraging each other playing the game (Fieldnotes, 3/4/15). Another example of social interaction with students happened on Halloween when I was able to talk with students about their costumes. Rebeka dressed up as a psychopath because she was doing a research project on them and the motives for killing. Another student, had dressed as Charlie Chaplin because of how important he

was to film. I enjoyed working with the students and sharing conversations with them throughout the year; I was an observer participant.

Chapter 4

Findings and Results

Rebeka as Ambassador

But no living word relates to its objects in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with the specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape. (Bakhtin, 1981, p.276)

One of the first characteristics of PCE to emerge during this study was a connection between the students' lived experiences and the curriculum. Each student experienced learning in their own way and the connections made to the curriculum were just as unique.

It is important to understand that speech and/or utterances happen in a time and place among people and objects or as Bakhtin suggests above, in an environment. It is in this environment in which an utterance and the speaker's interaction with others to occurs. The utterance not only occurs in a time and place, but it also carries with it influences from other times, places, and people. Bakhtin argues that there is no such thing as a truly original thought or an original utterance, because all thought, and by extension utterances, carry some influences (Smith, 2014). This understanding of thought and utterances illustrates speech as an interaction between both the speaker and the listeners. Further, the narratives that we create in learning and schools occur in the elastic environment suggested by Bakhtin where other thoughts and utterances are present and position the speaker. The narratives that emerge in schooling environments are dialogic and layered much like an onion has layers.

The narratives that students share in a classroom can provide evidence of how they are connecting what they are learning with their lived experiences. Place-Conscious Education (PCE) connects the curriculum to the community and students' lived experiences and this connection is not just a linear relationship, instead it is a dialogic cycle. The connection between PCE, the curriculum, and the community is also negotiated by the student and it is this negotiation that provides a frame for narrative.

First, I provide a rich description of the unit of study in which Rebeka's narrative emerges from. The data for this description came from observations made in during class from October 2014 through January 2015. Next, I explain how one student, Rebeka, becomes an ambassador to the class. Through Rebeka's narrative a connection between the curriculum and her lived experiences emerges, which as mentioned previously, is a characteristic of PCE. The connection between the curriculum and students' lived experiences is important because:

By reconnecting rather than separating children from the world, place-based education [PCE] serves both individual and communities, helping individuals to experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the commitment and contributions of their members. (Smith, 2002a, p. 594)

Rebeka's narrative positions her as an ambassador or expert in class on the Jewish religion and culture which reflects the statement above in that PCE here helped Rebeka experience the value that other hold for her expert knowledge.

World War II Unit

The seventh grade English Language Arts class in Carter studied a unit about World War II centered on the text *Night* written by Elie Wiesel. This book is one

survivor's account of the Nazi invasion of his town and his subsequent experiences of detention in a work camp. Wiesel describes the harsh conditions of life in the work camp for both his father and himself and how they were permanently marked with a concentration camp tattoo. The book also has his reflections on his personal feelings about survival during the Holocaust and his questioning of his own Jewish religion. In the beginning of the book, there is much description concerning the Jewish religion and how Wiesel is himself deeply religious and studying the Talmud, the Jewish holy text.

The Jewish religion became an important topic of discussion during the class as evidenced by the many times that students took up the thread themselves and asked questions. Judaism was further discussed in this unit to provide context, background information, and to explain certain references made in the book. In order to facilitate a deeper understanding of how horrific events such as this have occurred in history and are still occurring today, the class took up two main critical lenses in their discussions: otherness and survival.

The teacher read the book out loud to the class while they listened and completed a reading guide. The class discussions occurred throughout the time that the teacher read the book to the students; students would raise their hand with questions or the teacher would pause to unpack or "think" about certain critical events or to discuss themes that the class was taking up. For example, in one class discussion the topic of dehumanization is unpacked and why the Nazi's dehumanized the Jews. One student, Casey, stated that he thought a character got hit in one particular instance in the book for asking to go to the bathroom because it helps to dehumanize him (Fieldnotes, 11/20/14).

Critical thinking skills were evident in the reading guide which had both questions for the students to answer based upon factual evidence from the text as well as questions for the students to draw their own conclusions. For example, one question asked students to explain why they thought the Jews did not fight back at the Concentration camps. At the end of the unit, the students wrote a paper on any topic concerning World War II using in-text citations; the in-text citations were the specific skill that was emphasized and taught through this writing assignment. The students were able to choose the topic that they would like to write on but they then had to complete a pre-writing form and have a mini conference with their teacher to discuss their topic. After they received approval from the teacher, the students then researched their topic using different sources such as books, television, and the internet; while working on their research the students were to also complete research notes that they would hand in with their final project. From observing the students during research time, most students relied heavily on the internet for their sources as evidenced by their time spent surfing the web. After the students completed research, they then began the writing process of writing a rough draft, peer-editing, and then writing a final draft for submission of a final project. All drafts and peer-editing comments were turned in with the final draft as part of the project.

Throughout the class discussions and reading of the book and into the final project, I followed a narrative of one student's connections between her lived experiences of culture, language, history, and religion and what she was learning in class with her peers; as stated earlier these connections are important to explore because they are a major characteristic Place-Conscious Education. The narrative of this student was

analyzed by transcribing interviews conducted with the student and coding the observations. Further documents were analyzed for supporting evidentiary warrants.

Rebeka

Rebeka was a student in the 7th grade English language arts class. She was an A student that handed in work on time and followed the rules in class; she raised her hand before she spoke, asked permission to use the restroom, actively engaged in class discussions, and was concerned with handing work in on time. This was her second year at Carter which is important to note because she was one of just ten students to attend 6th grade the previous year; as noted previously that was also the first year that Carter had a 6th grade. Rebeka said that she likes school and more specifically she likes Carter.

Rebeka was an intelligent and hard-working student that enjoyed her individuality. Rebeka carried a *Doctor Who* Tardis backpack and from talking with her I learned that this is a show that she enjoyed watching with her father. She had her hair dyed a medium red and her mom braided it for her often. Because she spoke of her family often I assumed that family is important to her. She seemed most comfortable working with other girls in class and she often partnered with Eva for peer-editing. Eva dressed completely in black and self-identified as being Goth; Eva was also a hard working student that handed in her assignments in a timely manner.

Rebeka often participated in class and other school activities. For example, for Halloween this year Rebeka dressed up as a serial killer because she was doing a research project on serial killers and their motivation. She carried a doll that had the eyes dug out and wore black lipstick. One day towards the end of the year, Rebeka was shadowed by a

potential future student in order to get an idea of what school life is like at Carter. Rebeka told me that she liked having someone shadow her because she can show them the best the school has to offer.

Rebeka self-identified to her peers and teachers that she was Jewish. She stated in an interview that she was active in her synagogue and that this is also her Bat Mitzvah year. She said this makes life particularly stressful, “because you have to, you have to recite part of the Torah for the Bat Mitzvah” (Interview, 12/17/14). Throughout the *Night* unit Rebeka was looked upon to explain many references from the book such as any Hebrew language references, Jewish prayers, and Jewish religious rituals. Not only was she called upon by the teacher to explain a certain word or reference, but she also volunteered to share her knowledge with the rest of the class. Over the course of class discussions about the book *Night*, Rebeka shared and developed a narrative of expert or ambassador through being called upon for information and her own voluntary sharing. Rebeka being positioned as an ambassador was important to this study because as stated above it allowed Rebeka to experience her value as an expert and for the class to benefit from her knowledge.

Ambassador to Class

I am using the term ambassador to describe Rebeka for two specific reasons: 1) an ambassador is familiar with the culture, language, and religion that they represent and 2) an ambassador is called upon to share their knowledge with others who may be unfamiliar with their culture. Rebeka’s position as an ambassador is important because it

connects the curriculum to her lived experiences while simultaneously helping her to see value in her experiences.

Ambassadors can be official or unofficial and can also be self-appointed or nominated; in examining Rebeka's narrative, I suggest that she was an unofficial ambassador that was both self-appointed and unofficially nominated. Rebeka became an ambassador to her class by first volunteering information and then being called upon by her teacher as an expert. An example of Rebeka's skills as an ambassador was illustrated in class when she was called upon by her teacher to explain the book's reference to the Jewish prayer for the Dead, Caddish (Fieldnotes, 11/19/14). Rebeka pronounced the Hebrew name of the prayer and then explained when and why it is done. As an ambassador to the class Rebeka not only shared her knowledge of the Jewish culture/religion, but she also connected the greater themes in class discussions of the book in ways that other students might not.

Racism was a theme that was discussed in relation to the book and current events. During discussions, the class agreed that racism is still around today and two students offer examples of racism that dealt with skin color. The students talked about Michael Brown, a black man that was killed by a white police officer. Rebeka offered a different example of racism about the shooting last year of a Jewish man as he left a retirement home (Fieldnotes, 11/19/14). This is a first example of Rebeka being an ambassador and relating ideas that are important or relevant to her culture and her place to the discussion at large. Rebeka's statement evidenced that she connected the discussion on race to her

own lived experiences of being Jewish and then shared that knowledge with her classmates.

At other points in the on-going book discussion in class Rebeka offered examples of Jewish traditions to class. For example, “Can I just say that it is really hard to fast from Sun up to sun down. I don’t have to yet but I see my family do it. Like my mom who lives off of coffee can’t even have that” (Fieldnotes, 12/3/14). Rebeka’s willingness to share during the discussions created a narrative of her as an ambassador for the Jewish religion/culture as well as an expert. This family narrative further evidences how Rebeka is able to experience value in her own lived experiences and share them with the class.

Rebeka Shared a Story

During class and in an interview Rebeka shared a story with the class about her Great Aunt’s survival of a concentration camp. This story was first shared during a class discussion on the concentration camps; the main character in the book they are reading arrives at a concentration camp and is tattooed (Fieldnotes, 11/4/14). This narrative in class at this time positioned Rebeka as an expert because she not only had familial knowledge of the concentration camps but she was able to share her lived experiences with class that valued those experiences. Later, during an interview Rebeka elaborated more on her Aunt’s story (11/20/14). Below is my interpretation and representation of her story from the class discussion and the interview:

Rebeka raises her hand at the end of notes the class was taking on World War II and says, “I think she’s my great aunt, but anyways. My great aunt met her husband in a concentration camp. Once she pulled her sleeve up and I saw her tattoo so I was like why does she have just a bunch of numbers and letters on her arm? And I asked my mom and she was like she was in the Holocaust she was in

a work camp and so that was the first time that I learned about the horrors of the Holocaust. My family is Russian but the border changed so much during the war that we can't be sure which side of it we were on. My aunt was separated from her family and met this young guy her own age. They got separated in the work camps but it was towards the end of the war so I don't know how but they found each other again and then came to America after the war and got married. She told me this story a few years ago. She just died not too long ago." (Fieldnotes, 11/4/14; Interview, 11/20/14).

During the interview Rebeka was questioned about her perceptions concerning studying a topic that is connected to her lived experiences and how she felt about being positioned as an expert in this subject. The literature suggests that by connecting students' lived experiences to the curriculum that students are therefore more motivated in the classroom. The findings from Rebeka's interview were however mixed. Rebeka reported that she was interested in learning about the Holocaust because "it's a big part of my culture, I mean at my synagogue, we talk about it" (Interview, 12/17/14). Later though, when asked if her family connection made this unit of study more interesting Rebeka responded, "Yes and no, because this topic can be equally interesting to someone who has no connection at all" (Interview, 12/17/14). When asked if she minded explaining Jewish culture to her classmates Rebeka responded with a shrug, "Not really, I mean I have friends who are not Jewish so I've had to do it a lot" (Interview, 12/17/14). She then describes her last school where she had to explain a lot and people weren't really understanding. All of these statements suggest that Rebeka's perception of the connection between the curriculum in school and her lived experiences was one of interest and ambivalence.

Rebeka's Narrative and Place. As discussed previously, Place-Based Education is the process of utilizing the local community and environment as a starting point for all learning, to teach concepts in subjects such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and all across the curriculum (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-Conscious Education (PCE) extends this connection between community and curriculum to include culture, social struggles, inequality, history, language, political structures, and economics. In other words, it is connecting community, curriculum, and the students' lived experiences in a dialogic manner that is negotiated by the student. Further, the connection between the curriculum and students' lived experiences provide students experience in valuing their lived experiences and enabling them to see their contributions to community, in this circumstance the class discussion.

Evidence of the dialogic connection between PCE and student was explored by analyzing the classroom narrative and the student's interview narrative. These narratives positioned both Rebeka and her classmates listening; it is through this positioning that connections between the curriculum and the lived experiences of Rebeka (PCE) were explored. Rebeka's narrative revealed how she connects the survivor's story in *Night* to her lived experiences as a Jewish, teenage girl.

Three Dimensional Narrative Inquiry

Educational researchers interested in narrative inquiry are really interested in what happens in real places while real learning is occurring. Further, educational researchers explore:

learning and teaching and how it takes place; they are interested in the leading out of different lives, the values, attitudes, beliefs, social systems, institutions, and structures, and how they are all linked to learning and teaching. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxii)

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) explain that grand narratives are the larger narratives that happen all around us such as the grand narrative of anti-oppressive education. Grand narrative is a term that is useful for categorizing narratives and then further understanding narratives as either macro or micro (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Simultaneously occurring within macro or grand narratives are micro narratives. This is not to suggest that there is a binary between macro and micro narratives; instead, narratives are on a spectrum and can fluctuate. Narratives are also occurring simultaneously and are layered upon each other. Student [micro] narratives unfold over a period of time and are connected by a common thread. One of Rebeke's micro narratives in the English Language Arts class is her being an expert and ambassador during the unit on *Night*, a macro narrative.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) use narrative to explore boundaries or the specific places where narratives enter into the intellectual territory of another way of thinking (p. 21). This concept of boundaries was exemplified by Rebeke's narrative entering into the intellectual territory of the class discussion of *Night*. Clandinin & Connelly go to state that "Dewey's two criteria of experience, *continuity* and *interaction*, provide a theoretical frame for identifying tension at the boundaries" (p.21). For the purposes of this analysis, it is the interaction that occurs at the boundaries that is explored.

The context of narratives is one element that should be considered first. Narratives occur on-going in time and place. This is important to note because Clandinin

and Connelly (2000) suggest that it is critical to keep in mind place and experience when using narrative inquiry. Similarly, John Dewey's theory of experience not only provides a theoretical framework but is the foundation for Clandinin and Connelly's terms for thinking about narrative inquiry, "specifically with his notions of situation, continuity and interaction" (p.50). It is these terms that frame the positioning of a narrative and center experience at the heart of the narrative. According to Clandinin and Connelly,

this set of terms creates a metaphorical *three dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third (p.50).

The three dimensional narrative inquiry space can be conceptualized as occurring within and along-side grand narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Below is my visual representation of a three dimensional narrative inquiry space.

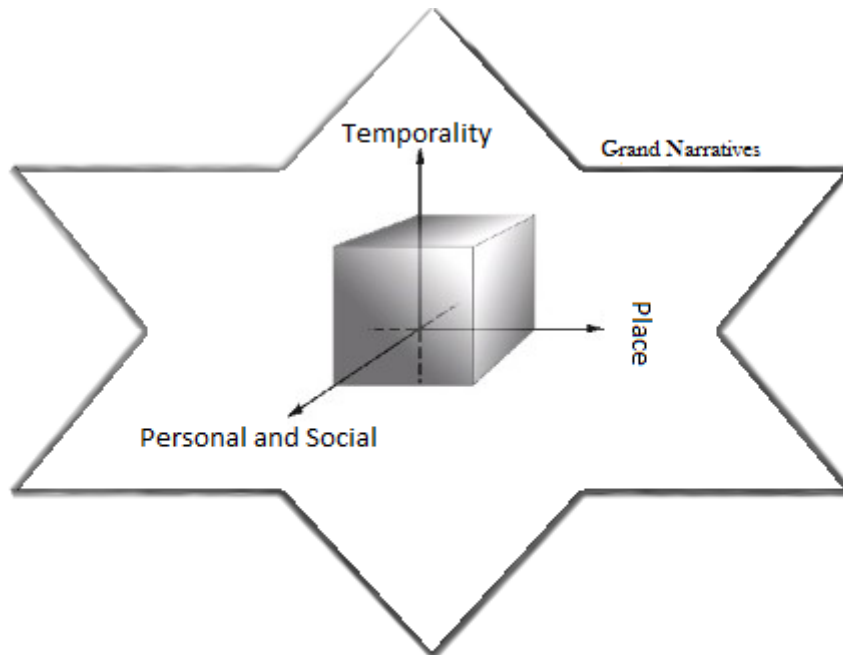


Figure 4A: Three Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

The narrative that is being told occurred over a period of time in many different places or “sequences of places” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). For Rebeka’s narrative, the place was Carter School, in a large, Midwestern city, in the English Language Arts classroom and at Rebeka’s individual table. The seating arrangement changed mid-way through this unit; at first the whole class was seated at a horse-shoe arrangement of tables and then the teacher separated the tables so that students sat in groups. This rearrangement did not seem to impact student participation as evidenced by the same students continuing to contribute to the class discussions. Rebeka sat with two other male students, Cain and Eric. Both of these students contributed to the classroom discussions and were respectful of Rebeka.

Rebeka’s narrative emerged over the course of the unit which lasted from November to January. This was relevant to the temporality of the narrative that unfolded for Rebeka. There were different pieces of Rebeka’s narrative that emerged throughout the unit, each contributed individually to positioning her as an ambassador to the class. These different contributions to Rebeka’s narrative are like individual threads that come together to create a tapestry of a story. During each day of reading and discussion, Rebeka would add another thread to her story; for example, early in the unit Rebeka talked about the psychology of the German soldiers because she had just finished a project on killers (Fieldnotes, 10/30/25) and as the unit progressed Rebeka’s comments became more and more personal (Fieldnotes, 11/4/15).

The attributes of personal and social remain as one dimension in this model because they are in dialogue with one another and the narrator/speaker. According to

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) a narrative inquiry should focus on the personal and social in a balance to the inquiry which in turn points to the need for boundaries in narrative; while taking into consideration the dialogic characteristic of an utterance. For Rebeke's narrative, I am zooming in on one utterance in her narrative that positioned her in the class as an ambassador.

Another way of understanding the three dimensional narrative inquiry is to layer the four directions of an inquiry put forth by Clandinin and Connelly (2000): inward, outward, backward and forward. This layering aides the researcher to understand both their position in an experience and the participants position. According Clandinin and Connelly (2000) the inward direction of inquiry references internal conditions such as fear, hope, pride, and moral dispositions. Basically this is pointing to the personal and social dimension of a narrative inquiry space for the speaker of an utterance. For my purposes here, I cannot know Rebeke's internal conditions; however, I did ask her to reflect on how it made her feel to share or explain being Jewish. "I mean I've done it a lot" (Interview, 12/17/14). Rebeke goes on to say that she does have Jewish friends but the friends she sees everyday are not Jewish so she has explained her faith/culture often like on holidays.

"By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p 50). Clandinin & Connelly are here referencing the three dimensional model of a narrative inquiry space. Included in this is both the physical environment and the social conditions; an English Language Arts classroom during a 7th grade discussion on World War II. The physical location of

Rebeka's table and her tablemates were also considered in the environmental direction of narrative inquiry.

The forward and backward direction of narrative inquiry is responding to temporality. The forward motion of an utterance is how the utterance is moving the narrative along and how it is responding to the utterances of others; in the case of Rebeka, the forward direction of her utterance was to illustrate a personal connection to the story they were reading. The backwards movement was describing all the thought, history, and shared understanding that accompanies an utterance. Rebeka's narrative came from a family history, culture, and religion.

The environment in which an utterance occurs provides a useful window to frame an analysis; however, how an utterance positions a speaker is also important. In any narrative there are shifts or pivots within a story and a particular utterance can stand-out as one of those pivots. Rebeka's narrative had one particular pivot; throughout much of the class discussions Rebeka offered information about the Jewish Religion but on one particular occasion she offered a personal story that connected her family as survivors of the Holocaust to the story the class is reading. In the next section, I will zoom in on this particular utterance that pivots Rebeka's narrative in order to better understand how this positions her as an ambassador in her class.

Interactional Discourse Analysis

An utterance is but one piece of a larger narrative or discourse. Stanton Wortham (2000) approached discourse by using Bakhtin's conception of utterances as dialogic for a foundation of analysis. This allows for the examination of an utterance, which could be

a single word or phrase, to be examined in the context in which it was spoken in order to understand the layers of interaction of the utterance. This is done primarily because “any utterance can position speakers in various ways, depending on the particulars of the context it appears in” (Wortham, 2000, p. 17). Therefore, in order to better understand how students perceive the connection between PCE and their lived experiences and see the value in their lived experiences, I used an interactional discourse analysis to analyze an utterance in class that links one student’s culture, religion, family history, and language to the book *Night* that the class was discussing.

The underlying assumption of interactional discourse analysis is that language and discourse are dialogic. By dialogic, I mean that language and discourse are interactive, and that any utterance is both in response to a past utterance and the precursor to a future utterance. Voloshinov/Bakhtin (1981) state that,

The process of speech is broadly understood as the process of inner and outer verbal life, goes on continuously. It knows neither beginning nor end (p.60).

An utterance is understood to be in dialogue with other utterances, both spoken and thought. For example, Rebeka’s story about her great aunt having an arm tattoo from the Holocaust is an utterance that responded to the class discussion of the book *Night*; however, this was only one layer of utterance response. A deeper examination of the utterance response also included the history of this particular utterance, from the actual experience of her great aunt having her arm tattooed by the Nazis, to Rebeka noticing the tattoo having it explained by her parents, to then sharing this utterance in class. This one utterance had a history that goes back in time to atrocities committed by the Nazis and the

collective history that led up to that point and then reaches forward in time to those who will remember and discuss World War II in their English Language Arts class.

While examining an utterance it is important to understand how it is in dialogue with other utterances; however, equally significant is to examine the interactional positions of the utterance. According to Voloshinov/Bakhtin (1981),

the outwardly actualized utterance is an island rising from the boundless sea of inner speech; the dimensions and forms of this island are determined by the particular *situation* of the utterance and its *audience*. (p.60)

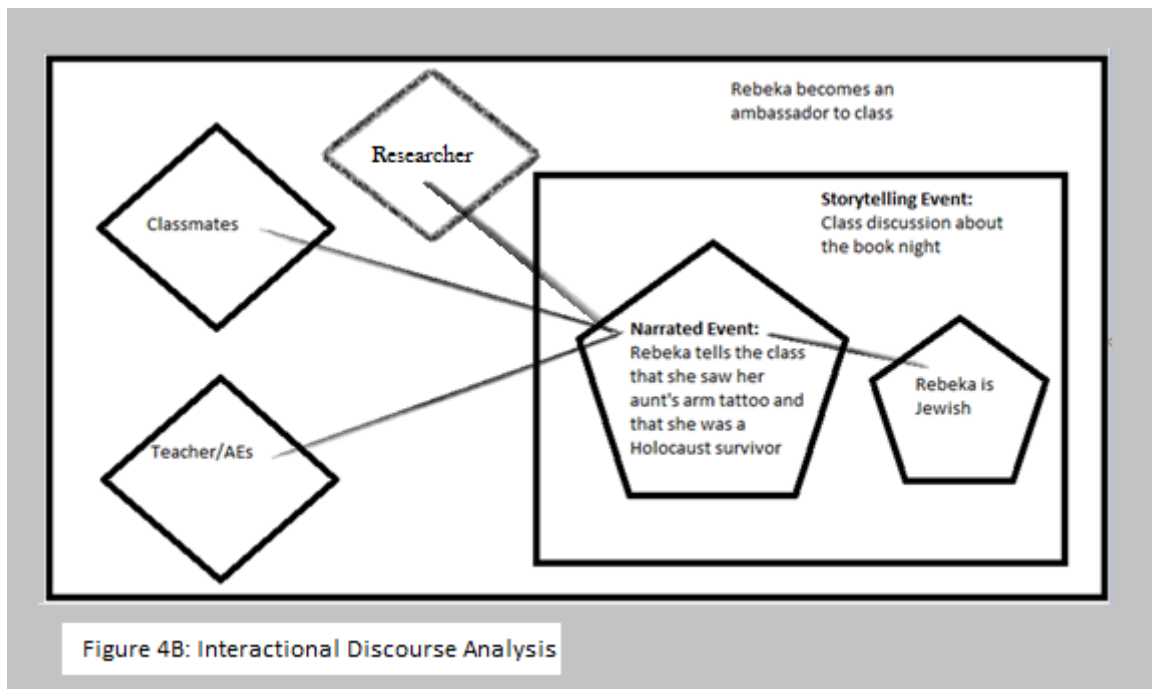
These two defining characteristics of an utterance provided useful guidance in beginning to place an utterance as interactional. An utterance occurs in a situation and dialogues with an audience, even if that audience is the inner consciousness. According to Wortham (2000) who employs Bakhtin as a theoretical framework,

an utterance does always represent an object, it also contributes to the speaker's position with respect to others—and this interactional positioning is essential to the meaning of the utterance. (p. 19)

Wortham (2000) further suggests that there are two important elements of an interactional discourse analysis: the storytelling event and the narrated event; “most narratives presuppose at least two interactional events: one described as part of the narrated event and one enacted in the event of the storytelling itself” (p. 20). The **storytelling event** is the interactional context or situation within which the speaker utters something, in this case the storytelling event is the class discussion about *Night*. This storytelling event occurs at the beginning of the unit of study which is World War II and focuses on the book *Night*. At the time that Rebeka spoke this particular utterance, the class was going through notes on War World II that the teacher projected on the

overhead. Students were able to ask questions or share information while the teacher went through the notes. Simultaneously, the students were also expected to fill in the blanks in a notes outline which is the notes from the slide wrote in a worksheet format.

The **narrated event** is the event described by the utterance, in this case Rebeka's story about her aunt. Rebeka described how she saw the arm tattoo on her aunt and came to learn that she was a survivor of the Holocaust exemplified a narrated event within the storytelling. Both events positioned her as an expert with personal knowledge about the Holocaust that she then shared with the class. The dialogic utterance not only positioned the speaker but is also dialogic between the narrated event and the storytelling event. The narrated event working within the storytelling event is dialogic.



The figure above illustrates through Wortham's (2000) model how Rebeka positioned herself as an ambassador in the class. Represented here are four distinct social entities:

Rebeka, researcher, classmates, and the teacher along with the class assistant educators (AEs). An ambassador has expert knowledge of the culture that they are representing and Rebeka demonstrated her position as an expert on the Jewish religion/culture during the class discussions about the book *Night*. Further, Rebeka's connection between place (place being her religion, culture, language, family history, and lived experiences) and the book *Night* dialogically positioned her as an ambassador.

That Rebeka is Jewish is represented as a separate element of the storytelling event because in this particular utterance that information is not specifically shared; however, it has been shared in past utterances and remains a constant in her narrative. The significance of examining how Rebeka's utterance positioned her as an ambassador and expert in class is twofold. First, the narrative itself evidences how Rebeka was able to connect her lived experiences with the curriculum discussed in the classroom and it is this connection that is an important characteristic of PCE. Second, by sharing her expert knowledge of the Jewish culture and religion, Rebeka, as individual, was enabled "to experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the commitment and contributions of their members" (Smith, 2002a, p. 594).

Chapter Summary

Rebeka became an ambassador to her class as they were studying a unit focused on the book *Night*. Rebeka's narrative over the course of the unit contributed information on culture, language, religious rites, and perspective from a Jewish person. Rebeka was an ambassador to class because through her narrative she was able to share knowledge about the Jewish culture, religion, Hebrew language, and her familial ties to the

Holocaust. Both the physical and social environments in which Rebeke's narrative became visible contributed to her positioning as an ambassador to the class. Her narrative had one particular pivoting point in which Rebeke shared an utterance/story about her great aunt being a Holocaust survivor and it was this pivoting point that illustrated Rebeke's position as an ambassador. This particular utterance further illustrated Rebeke's the dialogic connection between the curriculum in the classroom and her lived experiences, in other words, Place-Conscious Education.

Chapter 5

Results and Findings

Big “C” Conversations and Intertextuality

One of the most important characteristics of Place-Conscious Education is the fact that it is grounded in exploring learning and making connections through a critical lens.

Scholars and researchers exploring PCE

are interested in ways of knowing that change the knower—that generate a critique of existing knowledges and practices in such a way that they open up the possibility of transformation and change. (Somerville, Davies, Powers, Gannon, & de Carteret, 2011, p. 1)

One method that students have of employing a critical lens is through the use of Big “C” conversations in their classrooms (Gee, 2011). These conversations allow students to explore the multiple facets of a topic while in a safe, learning environment. In order for students to further understand the places they live in, they need to be given the opportunity to explore the Big “C” conversations associated with those places and this exploration is at the heart of a *place-conscious education*. According to Gruenewald & Smith (2010),

Place-conscious education challenges conventional notions of diversity in education, of multiculturalism or culturally responsive teaching, which too often take for granted their particularity and uniqueness. Critical issues of race, class, gender, are grounded in concrete experience, experience that always takes place somewhere (p.xxi).

This dissertation argues that the big “C” Conversations that the class engaged in:

1) aided in students’ understanding of what they were learning, 2) connected learning to

place, and 3) encouraged students to participate in social conversations. Students were able to delve deeper into the texts they were reading in class and thus deepen their understanding through participating in big “C” Conversations related to said texts. Students were further able to connect the critical issues they learned in relation to the texts they were reading to the places they live in. Lastly, through the big “C” conversations in class, students were able to participate in and contribute to big “C” conversations that occur in society.

Big “C” Conversations Within the Classroom

James Paul Gee (2011) uses the term big “C” conversations to identify ongoing societal debates or discussions about specific topics, such as, the current discussion about marriage equality or the ongoing discussion about gun control in light of the many mass shooting that occur in the United States. The importance of these big “C” conversations is that they allow a space for Discourse to be challenged, debated, and unpacked. These big “C” conversations are sometimes on issues commonly known to nearly everyone such as immigration or they can also be taken up by certain social groups as in the controversies in a given academic field (Gee, 2011). “This knowledge is an ever-present background you can bring to interpret things you hear and read or in terms of which you can formulate your own talk and writing” (Gee, 2011, p. 55). For the purposes of this study, big “C” conversations are one method used to investigate how students take up these conversations to inform their learning and connect critical issues in the classroom to the places that they live.

Within this 7th grade class there was much discussion about critical themes throughout the year. These themes or in other words big “C” conversations, allowed the students to connect what they were learning in class to bigger ideas outside of school and in society. Throughout learning about literature and writing, the seventh grade class explored critical themes that arose from their texts both through discussion and projects. Gee (2011) states that often when the term discussion is used in reference to societal issues like race or stereotypes that the word “discussion” is partly metaphorical; however, in this class the discussions were an actual ongoing narrative between the students and their teacher. It was these ongoing Conversations that the class engaged in that represented another characteristic of PCE, that of critical issue awareness. Gruenewald & Smith (2010) suggest that, “an education in place must also acquaint students with the way that their own health and security are codependent on the health and security of everyone and everything around them” (p.xxi).

The critical conversations that this class undertook throughout the school year helped to illuminate the awareness of codependence that PCE advocates.

Critical Conversations in English Language Arts classroom.

During the school year the class read many stories and books together and it was through these readings that critical conversations were held. These conversations allowed a space for students to explore critical topics and enact an identity of someone involved in these conversations. This was a space for students to meaningfully participate in societal conversations while connecting the critical debates with what they were learning. This connection is one characteristic that is important in PCE because the connections are

made between classroom learning and what is happening not only in the places where students live but in the larger society and even globally. “By connecting learning to real-world experiences, students can construct meaningful connections among cultural, political, and social issues” (Grahman, 2007, p. 377).

The big “C” conversations that the students participated were part of the narratives that came into existence during the class. There are, of course, many narratives occurring at a single moment in any given space and these big “C” conversations were but a piece of the whole of a narrative. According to Gee (2011) these Conversations are tools of inquiry that are used as a guide to exploring a piece of written or oral language (p. 60). One question that can be explored when examining a written or oral text is “What Conversations (public debates over issues or themes) are relevant to understanding the language and to what Conversations does it contribute (institutionally, in society, or historically), if any?” (Gee, 2011, p. 60). Below is a chart of the big “C” conversations that were observed as part of the larger classroom narratives about literature.

Big "C" Conversations		
<p><u>Night</u> Race Religion Otherness/Being dehumanized</p>	<p><u>Greek Myths</u> Gender Stereotypes Relationships</p>	<p><u>Threads</u> Immigration Family Relations Traditions</p>
<p>Table 5.1: Critical Conversation by Unit of Study</p>		

Race. One of the first big “C” conversations that I observed the class partaking in was based on race and ethnicity and discrimination. As mentioned in the previous

chapter, the class read the novel *Night* by Elie Wiesel. The big “C” conversations that the class engaged in during this unit of study aided in students’ understanding of what they were learning and provided a space/place for students to contribute to an on-going Discourse.

To begin this unit, the class watched a survivor’s story documentary in class in order to provide more background information about the time period that the novel was set in and to further stress to students the importance and seriousness of this particular unit. While watching the documentary students completed a viewing guide that provided questions for students to answer. This viewing guide provided a discussion starter for many of the big “C” conversations that were going to happen during this unit. For example, two questions from the viewing guide asked, “what groups do you see being targeted? In what ways do you see persecution happening in today’s world?” (Fieldnotes, 11/5/14). Correspondingly the teacher, Anne, led the discussion following the documentary with the question what does it mean to “other” someone and why do we do it (Fieldnotes, 11/5/14). The students then added to the conversation with what they wrote in their guides and their own opinions/knowledge. Aaron brought up the recent Michael Brown shooting and how race relations are still bad here in America; which is a prime example of Gee’s (2011) big “C” conversations happening right in the classroom. The conversation thread about Michael Brown had many students contributing and sharing their opinions. Rebeka added to the conversation that just last year a Jewish man was killed while leaving a nursing home and that was a race motivated shooting. All of these instances evidenced students participating in a big “C” Conversation that were both

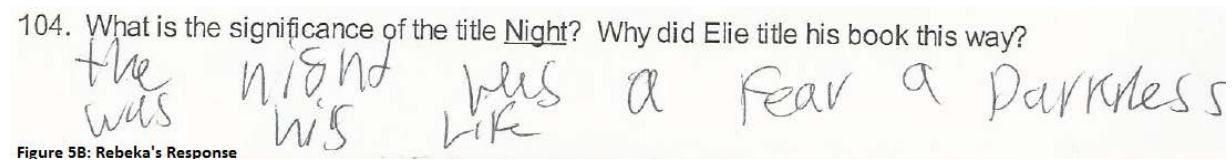
relevant to what they are learning and to society. Further, the students were able to unpack what race meant to them and connected it to their own knowledge while simultaneously aiding in their understanding of what they were learning.

As the class read the book, the reoccurrence of night was noticed as a possible metaphorical theme; however, this metaphor was not discussed explicitly but every time the word *night* appears the students were quick to point it out. At the end of the unit the students completed their reading guides and one of the questions addressed the theme of night. John's response is reproduced below and evidences that students made connections between the class' big "C" Conversations and the theme from the book.



John wrote, "it is a frase because that was what the holicost was" (Artifact, 1/13/15). The significance of this evidence is that it shows how a student is aided in their understanding of what they were learning. Further, this is another part of the big "C" Conversation the class is engaged in concerning race.

Rebeka had another thought concerning the theme of night.



Rebeka wrote, “the night was a fear a darkness was his life” (Artifact, 1/13/15). Similar to John’s this evidence is demonstrating how Rebeka is aided in her understanding of what she was learning as well as encouraging them both to participate in Conversations.

The book described the Jews arrival to the Auschwitz concentration camp and how the prisoners were thankful to God because they will be off the train cars that transported them. John brought up that the conditions in the train cars were really bad and that he would be thankful to be out of them too. Rebeka added,

You have to like let go of some of those things. Like you are letting go of social stuff. There are social things that you won’t do in public like clothes but they are in a cattle car and they had to. (Fieldnotes, 11/18/14)

It is at this point in the discussions that Anne steered the students to continue the big “C” Conversation about being dehumanized and otherness, “Isn’t this what the Nazis wanted? Stripping humanity away?” (Fieldnotes, 11/18/14). In their final reflections Rebeka and John agreed with their teacher and state that they believe this is the purpose of the book.

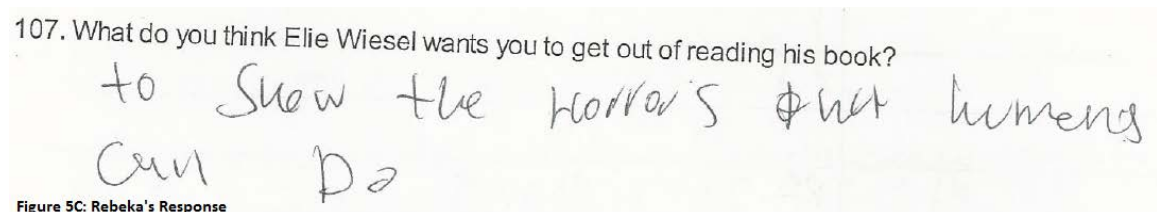
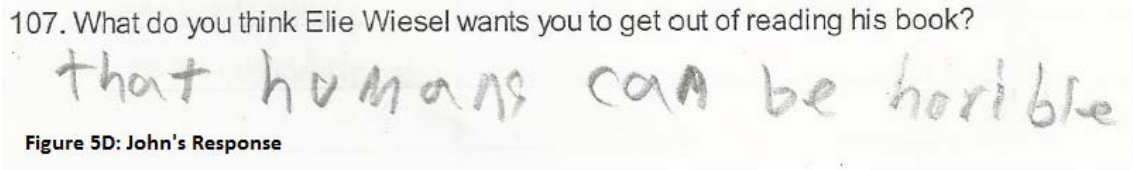


Figure 5C: Rebeka's Response

Rebeka wrote, “to show the horrors that humans can do” (Artifact, 1/13/15). This statement again evidenced that Rebeka was contributing to the Conversation in class and that she is aided by these Conversations in deepening her understanding of the content. Further Rebeka’s response evidenced that she was continuing the Conversation in class

about stripping away humanity as means to “other”. John has a similar response to Rebeka but contributed in his own way:



John wrote, “that humans can be horrible” (Artifact, 1/13/15). Not only is his response his own but it also further evidenced how students were encouraged to participate in social conversations and thus make their learning connected to their own lived experiences.

Another activity that provided a space for students to take up the big “C” Conversation on race was a reflection form that students completed by either writing an “A” for agree or a “D” for disagree. An example of a question was “I think people of different races are treated equally in the United States” (Fieldnotes, 11/11/14). The students filled out their beliefs and then everyone lined up in the middle of the room. As Anne read each statement the students would move themselves either to the agree side or to the disagree side and to the extent to which they felt. This activity allowed students to physically experience the differing beliefs on race even within their own class. This activity was yet another means for students to participate in a Conversation about race while it also aided in students’ understanding of what they were learning.

It is interesting to note that the big “C” Conversations engaged students in critical thinking and allowed a space for students to explore important issues not only in their class but in society. The students were able to connect what they were learning in class

about race relations and otherness to history and the ongoing big “C” Conversation in the United States concerning race and equality. The teacher provided a space and place for the students to explore their own perceptions about big “C” Conversations while simultaneously connecting it to learning, which is a defining characteristic of PCE.

Gender and gender stereotypes. The class undertook a study of Greek mythology after the winter break. They read many Greek myths and discussed how these myths had been passed down and that there are many different versions so that what they read in class may be different from something else they have read or seen in a movie or in the media. The Greek mythology unit lasted for about 6 weeks and culminated in a final project in which the students were to write a modern day myth about one of the Greek gods. During the unit the class also performed a skit of Greek gods in order for them to become more familiar with the gods; this will be discussed further below.

The primary big “C” Conversation that was taken up by the class concerned gender and stereotypes. During class discussions of the Greek myths that they were reading, Anne and her students noticed that many times a female, whether a god or mortal, was often being pursued by a male against their will. Often times this resulted in a kidnapping and forced marriage. Anne encouraged her students to use a feminist lens when reading Greek myths because, “there is a lot of running away! Mostly it is women running from men” (Fieldnotes, 2/25/15). It is significant to note that this class is a majority of male students, 68% male, which engaged in the big “C” Conversation concerning gender and gender stereotypes. Arianna noted, “that if he was the King why didn’t her just marry the mom if she was a servant? (Fieldnotes, 3/3/15). The previous

statement points to the fact that female students took up this big “C” Conversation and used the feminist lens when reading the myths; however, it was the male students that had some of the most poignant comments. For example, Chris noticed, “That before Daphne turns into a tree Apollo grabs her” (Fieldnotes, 2/25/15). Here he is explaining why Daphne would turn into a tree and connecting it to the theme of running away, why would someone turn into a tree, to escape of course! Aaron points out an aspect of the myth that is somewhat incredible to modern day audiences, “that this story is talking about not just seeing someone on the street and saying I want to be with you” (Fieldnotes, 2/25/15). Aaron is making note of the fact that in many of the Greek myths the women were taken without their permission and this directly relates back to the big “C” Conversation concerning gender. In an interview, Arianne noted that these stereotypes about women and men were, “well, its okay that they thought this way because it was way back then. Stereotypes were different then” (Interview, 3/26/16). This statement is noteworthy because Arianna is considering the Conversation on stereotypes and then further considering it as a part of an ongoing Conversation with a past, present, and future. All of these comments evidence that students are thinking about these big “C” Conversations and connecting them to their own lived experiences while also deepening their own understanding of the myths.

Another theme that the class explored concerning Greek mythology is the son/grandson killing the father/grandfather. Arianna connected this theme of patricide to both the big “C” Conversation that the class is having over a period of time on gender and stereotypes and relationships. Arianna, mentioned, “That the gender stereotypes

come in when the king is like oh I love my daughter but she is just a girl and she might have a son that will kill me” (Fieldnotes, 3/3/15). In this statement alone, Arianna is addressing both a Conversation on relationships, father/daughter, and on patricide, her offspring will ultimately murder me. Similarly, when reading the story of Medusa and Perseus the theme of gender and Rebeka questions the story of Perseus because the general theme of gender doesn’t seem to work with this story. Rebeka says, “okay but so she is like a servant and he’s like a king so can’t he be like I want to marry you and you don’t have a choice. Why does he have to make the son go away?” (Fieldnotes, 3/3/15). This question is important because it is evidenced that Rebeka has taken up the big “C” Conversation on gender and stereotypes and is then able to point out discrepancies. Anne explains to the class that, “Perseus is the leader of the family and he is the boss because he is male even though he is the child. So it would be his decision if his mom got married or not” (Fieldnotes, 3/3/15). Again, it is important to note how students took up the Conversations in class in order to see how these Conversations reflected the critical uptake of themes in PCE. Further these conversations aided in students’ understanding of what they were learning as students were able to explain in their own words the stereotypes and patricide they were seeing in the myths. The class not only explored gender stereotypes concerning women but extended their big “C” Conversation to include gender stereotypes concerning men.

The class read the Greek myth about Atalanta and this again sparked big “C” conversations about gender stereotypes concerning men. During the discussion about the particular story, Arianna noticed that a female being distracted by a shiny object could be

considered a gender stereotype; however, Carl contradicted her opinion. Carl states, “It’s not necessarily just girls that are like, um shiny! If I see something that I have never seen before I would be like oh!” (Fieldnotes, 3/5/15). This exchange is interesting because it evidences that students are encouraged to participate in social Conversations and share their own opinions while respecting other points of view. This exchange was followed by the class taking up a new thread in the big “C” conversation concerning gender stereotypes, with the conversation turning to teenage males and the stereotypes around them. Anne suggested, “the main character is a stereotypical teenage that rages and kills people, well the killing isn’t stereotypical. He blames the people that he killed because they made him kill them” (Fieldnotes, 3/5/15). Magee added to the conversation that the main character is stereotyped because he gets hormonal and angry and kills his uncles; that all teenagers are stereotyped as hormonal (Fieldnotes, 3/5/15). Magee’s comments are of note because it evidenced that the students are able to add different threads to the big “C” Conversation on gender and gender stereotypes and able to make these conversations relevant to their own situations.

The unit on Greek mythology provided an opportunity for students to participate in big “C” Conversations concerning gender and gender stereotypes and relationships. Gender and gender stereotypes were noticed in many stories in Greek mythology that position women as not having control over their circumstances, such as marriage, and also as not having the same amount of power as men. Gender stereotypes of both women and men were commented on by students; however, gender stereotypes of women were noticed much more than those about men. I only observed one class session in which

gender stereotypes concerning men were commented on by students. Relationships was another channel of the big “C” conversation concerning gender and gender stereotypes. Students often noted the relationships between love interests in Greek mythology and how men often had more power than women over decision making. Separate to this conversation was a conversation on family relationships that the students undertook; particularly the relationship between father/son and the fear of patricide that is common in Greek mythology. The relationship between mother and son was also discussed in class and contributed to both big “C” Conversations on gender and gender stereotypes and relationships in general. Greek mythology provided multiple opportunities for students to participate in big “C” Conversations that aided in students’ understanding of what they were learning and encouraged students to participate in social conversations.

Intertextuality. A class skit embodying the Greek gods layered what students were learning in class with pop culture. According to Gee (2011), “a single written or oral text can be in one social language or it can switch between two or more or even mix them up pretty thoroughly” (p. 58). One way the students actually embodied the learning in class was they wrote and performed a skit on the Greek gods, which is an example of intertextuality between the talk show and Greek mythology. Here the text of Greek mythology is mixed up thoroughly with a type social language performed on television as shown in the table below.

This skit was set as a tabloid talk show, or more specifically, imitated the Maury Povich show’s format. Arianna and one of her classmates were the hosts of the show and interviewed other gods and characters from Greek mythology about their relationships.

This tabloid talk show format for a skit provided a space for students to further explore the big “C” Conversations they were having in class concerning gender, gender stereotypes, and relationships.

Greek god (s): Student	Big “C” Conversation Reference	Talk Show Talk
Hera: Jim Hephaestus: Rebeka	Can't we just be friends No You threw me off a mountain	Confrontation between friends/family
Demeter: Arianna	You are the father	Paternity results revealed on stage
Zeus: Magee	Oh I'm sort of seeking love other places	Cheating revealed on stage
Persephone: Eva	Its [the underworld] better than being on the overworld [Earth]	Surprising revelation
Hades: Jenny	People are always the same too stupid too ugly and can't talk	Insults used for audience reaction

Table 5.2: Intertextuality between Greek myths and class skit

Many characteristics of a tabloid talk show are taken up by the students in order to explain the actions of the gods according to Greek mythology. The students layered the texts of Greek mythology with the social language often used by tabloid talk shows. For example, when Zeus was asked if he had fathered Apollo and Artemis, Zeus' reply was that they had been born. The interviewers then took out a piece of paper and said, “Zeus, when it comes to Apollo... You are the father!” (Fieldnotes, 2/17/15). Another example of the students layering the tabloid talk show language with Greek mythology was evidenced when Jenny insulted the audience. This insult was obviously used to get a

reaction from the audience, which is a common tactic in tabloid talk shows. What is noteworthy about the insult was that Jenny was able to do this while acting as Hades and thus embodying the Greek myths that she was learning in class. Another common element in tabloid talk shows is a confrontation between family member such as the one the students enacted between Hera and Hephaestus. This feud was in one of the Greek myths that the students read about and were then able to embody during their skit. One last element of tabloid talk shows that was layered with Greek mythology was that of romantic cheating being revealed. The hosts asked Zeus if he had cheated on his wife and Zeus answered that this may have happened once or twice. Then the hosts revealed that this is lie and that Zeus has cheated much more; this information was based on the Greek myths that the class had read. This intertextuality between the Greek myths and the tabloid talk show provided the class an opportunity to embody their big “C” Conversations on both gender and gender stereotypes as well as relationships. This is also an example of students connecting the curriculum to their lived experiences while simultaneously living the experience.

This project allowed students to further understand Greek mythology by embodying a god or other character from Greek mythology and interacting with one another. The students layered tabloid talk show elements and dialogue with the Greek myths that they had studied. This provided students an opportunity to explore Conversations more deeply while utilizing intertextuality to connect their learning with those Conversations.

Immigration, family and traditions. The final unit for the school year centered on the book *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story* by Pegi Deitz Shea. This is the story of a young Hmong girl who lost her family in the war, lives in a refugee camp with her grandmother, and then finally immigrated to America. This story centers mainly on a young girls' experiences with immigration and learning about a new place. This unit of study in particular was relevant to this study because of the overt connections to place, specifically and the large population of Hmong that have made this place their home; this connection will be taken up further in the next chapter. The final project for this unit of study was fairly open to students, the class discussed ideas such as creating a graphic novel that incorporated Hmong traditional symbols or to research about the Hmong in .

In this class there were three students who appeared to be of Asian descent; however, according to their teacher there were not any Hmong students in this class at the time. Two of these students were female and rarely shared in class or asked any questions; during my 8 months of observation one female did not speak once in class and the other only raised her hand to ask to use the bathroom. It was because of this lack of participation in the Conversations that I did not use these students as focal points for my dissertation research. One participant, Aaron, did contribute to the discussion on Hmong culture three times even pronouncing a Hmong word for the class; however, he did not ever self-identify as Hmong. I did not have an opportunity to interview this student and did not want to ask in class if he was Hmong because I felt this would be a violation of his privacy.

Following the communist occupation of Laos in the 1970s, thousands of Hmong traveled by foot and crossed the Mekong River into Thailand where refugee camps awaited them; from there many immigrated to the United States after the Vietnam War (Historical Society, 7/13/15). It was the story of these refugees that inspired the author of *Tangled Threads* to write this book even though she herself is white and has not lived in a refugee camp. The class took up the author's whiteness as part of their Conversations and critical exploration of themes in this text which will be discussed in more detail below. When asked about important life events the author states in an interview, "I'd have to say my trip to Thailand in 1989. Seeing tens of thousands of war refugees made me realize how much I had been taking for granted—a wonderful family, worthwhile work, food, shelter" (Chepeleff).

The first big "C" Conversation that occurred during this unit centered on life in a refugee camp such as the one the main character in the book lived in and that was inspiration for this book. For example, the book portrayed life in the camp as hard and cramped and how space is shared even if it goes against Hmong culture to keep boys and girls separate. Arianna asked about the schooling that occurred in the camps in preparation for immigration to the United States "So are they trying to Americanize them?" (Fieldnotes, 4/19/15). Anne responds, "So they are trying to get them accustomed to a whole new world. Like how to use the bathroom. And think of the opposite, put us in a refugee camp in Thailand and I wouldn't know what to do" (Fieldnotes, 4/19/15). This statement evidenced how the class took up the Conversation on immigration. It is disappointing to note that the teacher did not respond to the question

about “Americanizing” the immigrants; however, each individual is entitled to their own path in a Conversation. I assert that this lack of response to the “Americanize” question is an example of a critical conversation being shut down.

Later, the students took up the big “C” Conversation concerning language, specifically how someone learns the language of the country they immigrate to; one scene in the book portrays the main character as responsible for translating what her teachers in the United States say to her grandmother (Fieldnotes, 5/7/15). Anne mentioned that Carter does make an effort to provide translators at parent teacher conferences as part of the school’s commitment to their students and social justice (Fieldnotes, 5/7/15). This big “C” Conversation around refugee camps relates to the national conversations on immigration and the conversations in this class provides a space for students to explore the experiences of others that live/move in the same place as them. Further, this Conversation was directly related to place in that the school where the students attended was included in the Conversation.

Traditions and traditional culture of the Hmong was another big “C” Conversation taken up by the class. The theme that was noted by the class was that of “threads” that reoccurred throughout the book. Anne asked, “Anyone remember what the 7 white threads on her wrist symbolize? (Fieldnotes, 4/7/15). John answers, “Isn’t it supposed to bring her spirits back?” Anne, “Yes, if someone is sick then the Hmong believed that if someone was sick it is because their spirits were out of peace” (Fieldnotes, 4/7/15). Arianna noticed, “She is wrapping thread around her finger to calm herself down” (Fieldnotes, 4/9/15). Rebeka says, “The first time that we saw it when she was sick and

now she is sick again and we see it again. She did it on the bus too. It calms her down” (Fieldnotes, 4/9/15). Anne summarized, “She uses the thread to stitch herself together” (Fieldnotes, 4/9/15).

The Conversation on traditions was further explored by discussing language. Anne discussed with the students about the Hmong losing their written language and how missionaries taught the English language alphabet for the Hmong language (Fieldnotes, 4/30/15). It was through this Conversation about traditions that students were able to make connections between the text and the art work that they have seen in their community (Fieldnotes, 4/21/15). The assertion here is that this particular Conversation had a direct connection the local and the curriculum. Further, ll of these statements concerning the Hmong tradition of threads suggested that students are partaking in a Big “C” Conversation about traditions while simultaneously making sense of what they are reading in class.

Another tradition of the Hmong that is discussed in class and related to the theme of threads is the tradition of embroidering tapestries, called pa’ndau in the Hmong language. The book described how the main character’s grandmother uses this art of embroidery as a method of history and storytelling, a way to remember what happened to their people. The students connected this art form to a recent field trip that they took to a local science museum that has Hmong art on display (Fieldnotes, 4/21/15). Arianna said that she had seen Hmong art work displayed in A large, Midwestern city that depicts the Hmong crossing the Mekong River (Fieldnotes, 4/21/15). Participation in the big “C”

Conversation around Hmong art and traditions once again exemplifies a characteristic of PCE and that is the connection between learning and lived experiences.

Chapter Summary

Place-Conscious Education embraces critical explorations in learning that act as a means to increase students' awareness, appreciation, and participation in the various communities to which they belong (Gruenewald, 2008; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010). The big "C" Conversations that enabled such critical explorations in this particular class came from the texts that the class was reading and other sources that the students brought from their lived experiences such as news stories, art projects they have seen, family stories, and various media sources. These big "C" Conversations provided the students a space and place to explore critical themes that are relevant to them while connecting to what they are learning.

Researching, teaching and learning about place means participating in a contact zone of difference. Big "C" Conversations provides a path to participating in a contact zone of difference. This requires continuing engagement with difficult questions moving beyond a personal comfort zone to refuse easy answers and often to dwell in a space of unknowing. (Somerville, Davies, Power, Gannon, & Carteret, 2011, p. 6).

This description of learning that includes place puts into perspective how Gee's (2011) big "C" conversations can be a crucial characteristic of PCE. Through these Conversations students were able to engage more deeply with what they were learning, connect what they are learning in their class to the places they live, and to participate in

ongoing social conversations about critical issues in society, or in other words a Place-Conscious Education.

Chapter 6

Findings and Results

Place Conscious Education and Localism

A pedagogy of place brings school and community together on a common pathway dedicated to stewardship and life-long learning. It is teaching by using one's landscape, family, and community surroundings as the educational foundation. Significant learning takes place outdoors and in the community. This community expands outward from the local landscape and home, to regional realities, to international issues. In coming to know one's own place, one comes to know what is fundamental to all places. (Diden, n.d., p. 1)

One very important characteristic of Place-Conscious Education that was observed during this study was the connection between place and the learning happening in the classroom. Specifically, the teacher undertook a unit of study about a recent immigrant population in, the Hmong. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Anne and her students studied the book *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story* by Pegi Deitz Shea. Throughout the course of studying this text, the class discovered many connections to place and their lived experiences. These connections enriched their learning and provided students a space to explore more deeply the place and communities in which they live and to learn about the people they share these places with.

The classroom narratives that came from this unit were centered on the importance of place and people. Both the students and their teacher constructed narratives that connected the learning occurring in the classroom to the places that they live. These classroom narratives came from a teacher's story, classroom discussions, and a student's final project. A common set of analytic terms: place and learning about the local, enabled a cross analysis of participants and their narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.

143). This cross analysis yielded narratives about the learning that occurred in the classroom that was centered on local places and the people that occupy those places.

A Teacher's Pedagogy of Place

Jayanandhan (2009) describes place as “the starting point for articulating cultural meaning and awareness: the core of human emotional attachment” (p. 104). This statement shares similarities with reasons Anne describes as behind her choice to design this particular unit on the Hmong culture. Anne was deliberate in her design of this particular unit; she chose it because the Hmong are part of the fabric of now and she wanted that to be a part of what her students learned.

Researcher: What made you choose this unit for your class?

Anne: I was looking for a fictional novel or memoir detailing the journey of the Hmong from Laos to the US, or even, that would be appropriate for middle school aged students since has such a high population of Hmong residents. I didn't want that narrative ignored and not represented in my curriculum and in school in general (Interview, 4/30/15).

It is interesting to note that Anne describes the importance of including the Hmong narrative represented in her school and class. Along with the Hmong narrative, Anne also provided contextual information about this unit such as information on the Vietnam War and the role of the Hmong. In class, Anne discussed with students the poison gas described by the book that was used in Vietnam on the Hmong and how this was perpetrated by the United States. This was a tough topic to learn about a place that the

students call home but it was important as well for students to understand. By studying the Hmong narrative, Anne was providing a space for her students to understand their own place more deeply and how intertwined people are in the places that they live.

Similarly, Anne discusses further why she feels the Hmong immigration story is so important to place and identity. In this statement, Anne is alluding to a major characteristic of PCE and that is the curriculum adapting to the individual qualities of a place and the creative impulses of teachers and students (Fakuda, Ah Sam, & Wang, 2010; Smith, 2002; Gruenewald, 2003). This critical aspect of PCE is also used here in Anne's narrative and also how she discussed the author in class:

Researcher: Why choose this book?

Anne: I felt that the Hmong immigration story was a vital one to have as part of a larger theme of identity. The book appears to be well-researched and students respond to it well and it is a great leaping off place for me to be able to talk about history, politics, war, immigration, cultural appropriation, etc., but my major issue with it is that it is written by a white American woman and not from someone from the Hmong culture who could speak with an authentic voice. I'm still searching for that book! There are a few narratives but not one that I've found that is appropriate for this age level. (Interview, 4/30/15)

Anne notes that the author is not Hmong herself and mentions to the students that they should be aware that this is written by a white, American woman. The class discussed this and why it is important for students to be aware of who the author is and how

authentic the voice is. Throughout the class, Anne made a point to talk to students about her position as a white, English speaking, middle-class woman and by doing so she is naming her privilege. For example, during a discussion about the Hmong refugee camps Anne said, “But remember I am interpreting this through my own lens of being a white, privileged woman. I can’t even really imagine what it is like!” (Fieldnotes, 4/21/15).

This naming of privilege is of note because the teacher is modeling a critical lens looking inward and outward.

Relatedly, Smith (2007) suggests that using a critical lens in education is a pathway to making the “boundaries between schools and their environs more permeable by directing at least part of students’ school experiences to local phenomena ranging from culture and politics to environmental concerns and the economy” (p. 190). Anne directed her students’ school experiences to local culture and history:

Researcher: What are the themes that you take up or unpack with students in this unit? How did you choose these?

Anne: While reading, the biggest theme we talk through is ‘thread.’ Before reading, we talk through a brief history of the Hmong people, from 5000 B.C. up through the Vietnam War and today. We touch on the role of the U.S. in armed conflicts outside the U.S., immigration, etc., as well. I try to both let the novel guide the discussion along with identifying themes that students may find relevant to their lives; welfare, public assistance, friendships, child-adult conflict, etc., and I always try to bring current events, race/privilege, and politics into the discussion

to help them be more aware of how the world around them works (Interview, 4/30/15).

At the end of the unit, before students begin their projects on any topic related to the book, Anne showed a video-documentary on the Hmong to give the students more ideas and information (Fieldnotes, 5/12/15). Here Anne further discusses the deliberate connections that she has made to the local community while teaching this unit in the past.

Researcher: Do you make connections to the community or do you keep your teaching non-specific for this unit? Can you talk through examples?

Anne: I did have a Hmong hip hop artist come in to perform a few years back and have shown subsequent classes a video of he and his grandmother performing together (soooo cool). The same artist had a number of pa'ndau inspired tattoos, so he also talked to us about their symbolism in ancient times and today and spoke quite a bit about what being a Hmong-American-n means. I've also relatively recently discovered the Hmong origin story, which I share with students, and I continue to try to find speakers, interviews, videos, etc. of voices that represent the Hmong in today's world. I think it is really important to do that explicitly and to not be non-specific. I also work really hard to remind students that my understanding of the Hmong culture, of the story, etc. comes filtered through my lens as a privileged white American woman and invite them to examine their own filters and lenses, and those of the author.

Again the importance of the critical lens is stressed and Anne is deliberate in modeling for students an inward examination. This pedagogy exemplifies a Place Conscious Education in that the teacher is connecting learning to the community outside of school while encouraging students to use a critical lens in their experiences both in school and out.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, during my observations, none of the students in Anne's class self-identified as Hmong. One student did pronounce a Hmong word during the reading, but he did not identify himself ever as being of Hmong decent (Fieldnotes, 4/30/15). In this last piece of narrative Anne discusses how she has accommodated students of Hmong decent in her class.

Researcher: How do address the needs of Hmong students in this unit? Can you provide past or current examples?

Anne: We do not have many Hmong students at Carter and I think I've only had one Hmong student read this novel with me in class. The one thing I kept a close eye on myself about was to not ever make that student feel like he had to represent his whole cultural group in any way. He did share a few times with the group and also said he'd help me with the pronunciation of Hmong words, which was a great help. We chatted about the story a few times outside of class, at his prompting, and at the end, he said that it was really great to have his culture represented purposefully in class, which hadn't happened for him to that point (Interview, 4/30/15).

From this teacher's narrative, it is evident how important a connection between what happens in the classroom and the students' lived experiences can be. Students deserve to see themselves represented in what they are learning in order to make that learning relevant and inclusive. Further, students benefit from a culturally responsive pedagogy that finds its foundation in place.

Class Discussions of Place

The class had ongoing discussions and Conversations on the texts they were reading. In the previous chapter the focus of analysis was on the critical themes that these discusses unpacked, here I have focused on the theme of place that came about during the last unit of study. The students took up the theme of place in response to the text; however, each student made unique connections to the theme of place. The significance of the students' connection to place was evidenced in how PCE connected learning to the lived experiences of students. The term place has been marginalized in Western geography to a concept of mere location (Taylor, 2013). However, recently the meaning of place has come to be further understood as it is experienced by individuals and groups and "the power dimensions of people's experiences and the construction of space/place" (Taylor, 2013, p. 807). The connections to place that the students made when discussing the text evidenced how each individual constructed their own meaning of place and how it related to the text.

A Metaphor of Place

While reading *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story* the theme of place was a common strand of the story as the story was about immigration and the moving between places and learning about new places. The theme of place was explored in different ways through the class discussions: 1) a metaphor of place, 2) a specific reference to the local community, and 3) by students making connections between the text and the local. Again, all of this exploration of place was a deliberate pedagogical choice on the part of the teacher in order to connect what was being learned in the classroom with local “narratives”.

The theme of place was especially prominent during times of transition in the story. For example, when the main character is taking a bus for the first time on her trip to America; at one bus stop she buys an apple that has a worm in it. Anne then prodded the class to look for symbolism in that scene.

Anne: The apple is not just an apple and the worm is not just a worm. If the apple represents the United States, what does the worm represent?”

John, “The worm represents all the bad stuff in the United States.” (Fieldnotes, 4/9/15)

The student’s response evidenced that he is examining place through the metaphor of an apple with a worm. In the book, the main character was thinking ahead to all the wonderful things that will happen to her once she is out of the refugee camp and in America with her uncle’s family. The above response further demonstrated that the

students were able to analyze what the text is foreshadowing about place, or more specifically that all places have good and bad qualities.

Jim: It depends on where they go. There are some really nice places in America, and there are some places that aren't really nice. It just depends (Fieldnotes, 4/8/15).

The class then took up the discussion about America and what it would be like to immigrate here. One student noted that people often think that America is going to be great but that it isn't always so. These connections between the metaphors used in the text and the local encourage students to explore local concerns with multiple lenses.

Connections Between Text and Local

Both the students and the teacher made specific connection between the text and the local. For example, Arianna talked about seeing some Hmong artwork in A large, Midwestern city that depicted the Hmong crossing the Mekong River. The flight of Hmong into Thailand was mentioned in the text; specifically, the Hmong were fleeing because of the slaughter of their people and the use of chemical weapons on their villages.

Rebeka: So she gets sick all of a sudden. Do you think that that could be an effect of the yellow rain? Even though they were in the forest they could have been exposed or when they went back.

An example of the teacher making a specific connection between the text and the local was when she mentioned local art. The class is discussing Hmong art that is described in

the text and Anne mentions that the class has seen for themselves an example at the local Science museum where they hang their coats when they go on field trips. These connections between the curriculum and specific places in the students' communities furthered students understanding of their communities and other communities.

A Project of Place

The final project for this particular unit was to select a topic that was related to the text in some way and complete a project about it. While describing the requirements of the project to her students and brainstorming ideas, Anne was again deliberate to connect project ideas to the local community. Below Anne shared ideas for the final project with students,

Anne: One idea which is to create a graphic novel or comic about the book. You would have to research Hmong symbols and incorporate that into your projects. One idea is Hmong in or something that is related. Remember we watched that video yesterday on the Hmong in, so maybe you could get an idea from that.”
(Fieldnotes, 5/13/15).

One student in particular, Eva, created a final paper that explored Hmong art in the community. For this project Eva researched three well-known Hmong artists that live in the community. Through her research Eva found artists working in the community that sometimes incorporate traditional Hmong images into their art. Eva wrote a paper describing three successful local Hmong artists: Kao Lee Thao, Mai C. Vang, and Tou Yia Xiong. These artists did not explicitly include traditional Hmong symbols, such as

those discussed in class, in their artwork; however, sometime these symbols were included.

Not only did Eva include local Hmong artists in her paper, but her research also led her to include an art professor at a local college and an art teacher at a different local high school. Both of these professionals were able to discuss Hmong art and the connections to the community. The importance of such a research project is best described by the student:

That was my paper on Hmong artists in MN, the artists I wrote about don't do traditional hmong [sic] art, but incorporate it in their art sometimes. I hope you learned about local hmong [sic] artists and go check out some of their art sometime (Document, 5/14/15).

Missed Opportunities

Many characteristics of PCE were noted in this class that contributed to students' learning; however, this class was not specifically engaging in PCE. First, connections to the local were noted during class but the local community was not ever brought into learning. Second, the projects that the students completed were only used for grading purposes and not presented to the public. Therefore, a missed opportunity to engage in PCE is noted because PCE enlists teachers, students, and community members to incorporate learning with the firsthand experience of local life and in the social and political processes of understanding and shaping what happens where they live (Gruenewald, 2008).

During each of the units undertaken during this class, there were opportunities for community members to be included in the learning. For example, Rebeka notes that she is a member of a Synagogue; a Rabbi or historian could have been a valuable addition to the unit on World War II and the Jewish experience. Perhaps, even one of Rebeka's family members or a community member could be brought in to share stories. Anne did show a video of a survivor's story and this is important for students to view; however, a community member may have had additional information. During the Greek mythology unit, local theater members could have been brought into the class to help guide the students during their skit. This skit was only performed in class and I think the community and/or school would enjoy the opportunity to have viewed it as well. Finally, during the Hmong unit, as discussed by Anne, there was a missed opportunity to bring in community members. Anne mentioned that she has done this in the past but not this time.

Another missed opportunity to more fully engage the classroom in PCE was the use of project learning. The class completed final projects for each of the units but these projects were only shared with teacher; not even between students in class. These projects could have been shared with the community in order to engage the community with the learning happening in the school. For example, the World War II projects could have been shared with the public on December 7th in remembrance of the Pearl Harbor bombing or in January 2015 which marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. The Greek mythology unit had two different projects that both offered opportunities for the students to share their knowledge with the community. The first was a skit of Greek gods and characters that was modeled after a

tabloid talk show. As an observer, I found this skit to be very informative and humorous. The second project during the Greek mythology unit involved the students rewriting a Greek myth in modern times. These rewrites could have been collected and published and shared with numerous audiences, such as nursing home patients or elementary school students. Finally, the Hmong unit final project offered an opportunity to bridge the school and community learning. Knowledge could have been shared between Hmong community members and the students to create their final projects.

To summarize, PCE enlists teachers, students, and community members to incorporate learning with the firsthand experience of local life and in the social and political processes of understanding and shaping what happens where they live (Gruenewald, 2008). Anne's class did have characteristics of PCE present throughout the units of learning; however, there were many missed opportunities to take a step further in bridging the connection between school and community.

Chapter Summary

Anne's pedagogy of place as described through her own narrative connects what she teaches in class not only to students' lived experiences but also to the local. It is through this pedagogy of place that Anne is taking up the characteristics of PCE; especially a critical examination of topics covered in class. Anne's design of the final projects did present a missed opportunity to more fully connect learning in the classroom to the community; however Gruenewald (2008) would applaud Anne's efforts as illustrated by his statement:

Given the cultural complexity of decolonizing and reinhabiting places, especially in an educational climate that is increasingly focused on quantitative, paper-and-pencil outcomes at the expense of any conversation about what it means to live well in a place, developing a movement for critical, place-based educational practices is a difficult proposition (p. 310).

Anne's students also made connections between the curriculum and their lived experiences and the local as evidenced by their discussions in class and their projects.

These students each had unique contributions to class and took up the learning in their own way, whether that was connecting art work to places they have visited, using metaphors of place, or researching local interests.

Chapter 7

Overview of Findings and Implications

A Place Pedagogy

Gruenewald (2003) suggests that the importance of a Place Conscious Education to both students and educators is that PCE works against the isolation of traditional education and enlists both teachers and students in the “firsthand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens” in their communities (p. 620). It is time for education to again look towards great minds such as Dewey and Freire to shape learning that is relevant to student lives and connected to the places that they live.

Overview of Findings

As described in the review of literature, a Place-Conscious Education has five central characteristics that frame this pedagogy. The first characteristic is that place is a central tenet for all learning; second is that PCE is inherently multidisciplinary; third is that PCE’s foundation is in experiential learning; fourth is that the boundary between teacher and student is broken down; and fifth is that PCE connects a learner with community (Clark, 2008; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith & Sobel 2010; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). These characteristics are theoretically what a Place-Conscious Pedagogy would encompass; however, the major scholars in this field also state that PCE is not a prescribed curriculum and therefore can take many different forms.

Carter was a small project-based urban charter school that does not claim to utilize PCE; however, a common theme that runs through the PCE literature is learning

that is experiential or project-based. Therefore, one of the premises that this study was based upon was that even though Carter does not explicitly position itself as a PCE school that elements of PCE would be found occurring in this school because of the project-based learning approaches. Relatedly to this premise was the gap in the literature on PCE concerning urban contexts and PCE in English language arts classrooms; most PCE is situated in environmental education and rural settings. Carter provided an opportunity to explore what if any characteristics of PCE could be found in a project-based school in an urban setting. Three main characteristics of PCE emerged during this study: 1) a connection between the curriculum and students' lived experiences, 2) an ELA class that explored critical themes that were related to the place they lived, and 3) a deliberate connection between the curriculum and place. It was from these characteristics that an exploration of students' perceptions of PCE was then performed.

Connections Between Curriculum and Lived Experiences

The first characteristic of PCE that emerged during this study was the connection between students' lived experiences and the curriculum. During the study of a World War II unit in which the class read the book *Night*, one student's personal connection to the curriculum became apparent through her narrative in the classroom. Rebeka identified herself as Jewish and then proceeded to share her knowledge with the class through the reading of this text. Rebeka positioned herself as an expert on this topic by sharing her knowledge of Jewish religious rites, by pronouncing Yiddish words used in

the book, and most importantly by sharing that she had a family member that was a survivor of the German concentration camps. By sharing with her classmates a story of her great Aunt's experiences in a concentration camp during the war, Rebeka positioned herself in the class as an expert and one that is able to share knowledge. Stanton Wortham (2000) provided a model of interactional discourse analysis with which Rebeka's story was analyzed. This model illustrated Rebeka's positioning as an expert among her peers and provided a visual analysis of interactional discourse in the classroom.

Rebeka's perceptions about studying a topic that is connected to her lived experience and how she was positioned as expert was explored through an interview. The literature suggests that by connecting students' lived experiences to the curriculum that students are therefore more motivated in the classroom and are able to experience value of their lived experiences. The findings from Rebeka's interview were however mixed; with her stating that she was interested in the Holocaust because of her experiences at Synagogue but that this topic should be of interest to everyone. Rebeka's perception of the connection between the curriculum in school and her lived experiences was one of interest and ambivalence.

Critical Themes

Critical pedagogy traces its roots to Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which recognizes that humans exist in and with the world and that knowledge can be empowering. A formative theoretical scholar of Place-Conscious Education, David

Gruenewald (2008) explains how Freire's work and Place-Based Education merged into PCE:

Reflecting on one's situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits; acting on one's situation often corresponds to changing one's relationship to a place. Freire asserts that acting on one's situationality, what I will call *decolonization* and *reinhabitation*, makes one more human. It is this spatial dimension of situationality, and its attention to social transformation, that connects critical pedagogy with a pedagogy of place. (p. 310-311)

Throughout the year, Anne's class took up reflection on what they were learning and attention to social transformation implications. For example, during the unit of study on World War II and the reading of *Night* the students took up the critical theme of race. During this same time period, a white police officer named Darren Wilson shot and killed an unarmed black youth named Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO (Halpern, 2015). It was from this killing that the "Black Lives Matter" movement started and a national big "C" Conversation on race and race relations began (Gee, 2000). The class took up this Conversation about race in the United States with the events and themes about race from the text.

The Greek mythology unit of study brought up new critical themes to have big "C" Conversations about such as gender, gender stereotypes, and relationships. The theme of gender and gender stereotypes came from the Greek myths themselves and how the different genders are represented in them. For example, in many of the myths, it is the women that are running away from some male pursuer; however, most often she is captured and married against her will. When the class read the Medusa myth about Perseus, it was noted that Perseus was sent on a journey so that his mom could be married

by the King. One female student noted that if he was the King why didn't her just marry the mom if she was a servant. Anne responded that as long as there was a male, Perseus the son, then he would make the decisions for the female (Fieldnotes, 3/3/15). This piece of the story led the class to engage in a big "C" Conversation about gender and power. Arianna noted the role that women played as second class citizens like when a female is born, "she is just a girl". Gender stereotypes concerning male characters in Greek mythology was also a topic of the big "C" Conversations taken up by the class. It was noted first by Anne that some of the male Greek gods were stereotyped as being impulsive and hormonal teenagers. The class discussed that stereotypes of both genders occur and that they are often not fair representations.

Another big "C" Conversation that the class took up during the Greek mythology unit was that of relationships. During many of my observations this was related to love interests in the Greek mythology and therefore was connected to the gender stereotypes Conversation; however, it was also noted by the class that a common theme in the myths was that of patricide. The Conversation around relationships was ultimately embodied by the students in the form of a skit that the class performed. This skit was modeled after tabloid talk shows on television, specifically the Maury Povich Show. Every student became a character from Greek mythology for this skit and was then interviewed on stage about their lives and relationships. The students layered the texts of Greek mythology with the social language often used by tabloid talk shows. For example, when Zeus was asked if he had fathered Apollo and Artemis, Zeus' reply was that they had been born. The interviewers then took out a piece of paper and said, "Zeus, when it comes to

Apollo... You are the father!” (Fieldnotes, 2/17/15). This intertextuality between the Greek myths and the tabloid talk show provided the class an opportunity to embody their big “C” Conversations on both gender and gender stereotypes as well as relationships. This is also an example of students connecting the curriculum to their lived experiences while simultaneously living the experience.

The *Tangled Threads* unit again engaged the students in big “C” Conversations; however, this time the students discussed immigration, family, and traditions. This book tells the story of a young Hmong girl’s immigration from a refugee camp in Thailand to the United States and her experiences with immigration. Various topics about immigration were taken up by the class such as refugee status and life in camps, language barriers, and expectations about the United States. The students noted that the main character worked very hard to learn English and that she was then responsible for translating for her guardian, her grandmother. Anne told the class that Carter tries to provide translators for their parents because of its commitment to its students and social justice. This exemplifies the connection made between big “C” Conversations concerning the curriculum, students’ lived experiences at their school, and a connection to the community members.

The concept of traditions was another big “C” Conversation that the class unpacked as there were many examples of traditions in the text. One major strand in the traditions Conversation was that of language and symbols. Anne discussed with the students about the Hmong losing their written language and how missionaries taught the English language alphabet for the Hmong language (Fieldnotes, 4/30/15). It was through

this Conversation about traditions that students were able to make connections between the text and the art work that they have seen in their community (Fieldnotes, 4/21/15).

Students were able to critically reflect on relevant social and political issues that were reading about in their class through big “C” Conversations (Gee, 2000). Through these big “C” Conversations students were also able to engage more deeply with what they were learning, connect what they are learning in their class to the places they live, and to participate in ongoing social conversations about critical issues in society, or in other words a Place-Conscious Education.

A Teacher’s Pedagogy of Place

The third characteristic of PCE that emerged during this study was a deliberate connection between the curriculum and the local. The connection that was made between the curriculum and the local was explored through a teacher’s narrative, student discussions in class, and a final project that furthered the connection.

In classrooms or schools where place-based education is well-established, inquiry into local concerns and problem-solving shape teaching and learning activities more than a standardised curriculum, and teachers and students function more as collaborative team members than as bosses and employees. (Smith, 2007, p. 190)

Anne planned the last unit of study to center around the book *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl’s Story*. It was through her teacher narrative that the choices behind this deliberate connection between the text and the Hmong in the community became apparent. Anne wanted the Hmong narrative to be represented in her class and in her school because she believes that it is an important narrative.

In her own words, Anne states, “and I always try to bring current events, race/privilege, and politics into the discussion to help them be more aware of how the world around them works” (Interview, 4/30/15). Anne planned many activities and projects that encouraged students to be more aware of how the world works. For example, the class watched a documentary on the Hmong in the community that discussed the history of the people and their immigration to the United States. Anne’s pedagogy of place encourages students to utilize multiple lens to examine their world and experiences and more specifically what they learn in school.

The final assignment for this unit of study was to create a project based on any theme from the book. For example the students could create a graphic novel about the story that included traditional Hmong symbols that they would have to research. Another example discussed in class was food waste in schools, because the main character couldn’t believe how much food was wasted in her new school. Anne suggested that students do a research project on food waste at Carter and make suggestions for improvement. These both examples of projects that connect the text to the local; however, the best example comes from a final project done by Eva.

Eva was interested by the art work described in the book and therefore set out to research local Hmong artists. She wrote a research paper describing three successful local Hmong artists: Kao Lee Thao, Mai C. Vang, and Tou Yia Xiong. Eva also researched the types of art that these artists are known for like textiles and oil paintings. Eva then connected the local artists with the text by researching what, if any, traditional Hmong symbols they used in their art. Eva’s research project not only made connections between

the local and the curriculum, but also continued a big “C” Conversation concerning traditions and the Hmong. Eva encouraged her readers to go check out some local Hmong art and that she hoped they learned something about it.

This unit of study that was deliberately designed by the teacher to connect a text to local concerns engaged students in critical thinking and making their own connections. The connection between text and the local further extends to students’ lived experiences and how they make sense of their world.

Limitations

There are several limitation of this current research. The first limitation is the object of this study being elements of PCE that were found in the classroom and did not interrogate pedagogy.. According to Merriam (1998) the single most important characteristic of a case study is the object of the study (p. 27). In this study, the object of the study is PCE in an ELA classroom and the bounded context includes the 12 students and 1 teacher; this boundedness presents another limitation in that only one classroom was studied. This study was conducted as one case and cross case analysis was not included. A final limitation of this study is the setting, conducted at a public charter school that is relatively small in an urban setting.

Directions for Future Research

Place-Conscious Education is an important, although small, movement in education that supports relevancy in learning; education and schooling become relevant in PCE because instead of sterile, standardized curriculum, students are engaged in their

environment, culture, history, and community (Azano, 2011; Chin, 2001). By its very nature, PCE can be conceptualized as a radical revisioning of schooling due to the fact that it introduces a “new localism” to learning in an already overly-crowded curriculum (Arena, 1999) as evidenced by this study. Future research should continue to be directed at schools both rural and urban that radicalize their curriculum through the use of PCE. Studies conducted with larger schools would also be beneficial to understanding PCE more deeply. Longitudinal studies that study the effects, if any, on student motivation in school would also contribute to the body of knowledge on PCE.

The characteristics of PCE can be a useful pedagogical tool for educators, researchers, policy makers, community members, and anyone else interested in educating students in local concerns. Research on how community partners experience PCE with schools is needed to understand more fully how to make more meaningful connections. My future research interests include examining how PCE is taken up in teacher preparation programs or in professional development workshops for teachers. I am also interested in how PCE is implemented in larger school districts.

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Appendix A; Teacher Consent Letter

Dear Educator:

My name is Kari Dahle-Huff and I am a researcher and a PhD candidate in the Critical Literacy English Education program from the University of . I am inviting you to participate in a research study of how the larger community is used in learning in your English Language Arts class. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach the 7th grade English Language Arts class at Avalon School this year. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose

I am conducting a research project at Avalon School to better understand how learning is connected to the larger community outside the school. This study will examine both teachers' and students' perceptions regarding learning connected to the community and any benefits from this type of learning. I am interested in exploring how 7th grade students feel about learning that is connected to the larger community.

Procedures

If you decide to participate, I will be observing some of your 7th grade English Language Arts classes and other learning activities relevant to my study. Some of the English Language Arts classes will be video recorded. I will also ask students and you to participate in interviews during school hours. Interviews will be kept under 45 minutes to be respectful of students' learning time and your work time. Interviews will be audio recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. All research activity will be conducted during the regular school day.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

I anticipate that there will be no risks involved in your participation in this study. There is no direct benefit to subjects who participate in this research. As a result of your participation you will be able to examine your experiences with learning connected to the larger community more closely and share your insights with others. There is no monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Only the investigator will have contact with the study data. In any publications or presentations that result from this study, there will be no inclusion of information that will make it possible to identify you or any person discussed. For the purpose of analysis of tape transcripts and video recordings, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of the data. Interview recordings, field notes, and survey data will be coded and kept in a locked cabinet. All data will be destroyed upon the completion of this research study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with the University of or Avalon School in any way. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contact and Questions

Please feel free to ask questions about the study, Kari may be contacted at dahle099@umn.edu and my phone number is 406-740-2271.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact Research Subjects Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

* * * * *

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you, the participant.

Appendix B: Parent Consent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Kari Dahle-Huff and I am a researcher and a PhD candidate in the Critical Literacy English Education program from the University of . I am inviting your student to participate in a research study of how the larger community is used in learning in the English Language Arts class. Your student was selected as a possible participant because they are a member of the 7th grade English Language Arts class at Avalon School this year. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose

I am conducting a research project at Avalon School to better understand how learning is connected to the larger community outside the school. This study will examine both teachers' and students' perceptions regarding learning connected to the community and any benefits from this type of learning. I am interested in exploring how 7th grade students feel about learning that is connected to the community.

Procedures

If you decide to allow your student to participate, I will be observing some of the 7th grade English Language Arts class and other learning activities. Some of the English Language Arts classes will be video recorded. I will also ask students to participate in interviews during school hours. Interviews will be kept under 45 minutes to be respectful of students' learning time. Interviews will be audio recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your student will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. All research activity will be conducted during the regular school day.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

I anticipate that there will be no risks involved in your student's participation in this study. There is no direct benefit to subjects who participate in this research. There is no monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Only the investigator will have contact with the study data. In any publications or presentations that result from this study, there will be no inclusion of information that will make it possible to identify your student or any person discussed. For the purpose of analysis of tape transcripts and video recordings, your student will be assigned a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of the data. Interview recordings, field notes, and survey data will be coded and kept in a locked cabinet. All data will be destroyed upon the completion of this research study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to allow your student to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with the University of or Avalon School in any way. Your student will also be asked if they want to participate in the study and to sign a letter so that they are given a choice as well. If you choose to allow your student to participate, you may withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contact and Questions

Please feel free to ask questions about the study, Kari may be contacted at dahle099@umn.edu and my phone number is 406-740-2271.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact Research Subjects Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

* * * * *

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Student Assent Letter

Dear Student:

I want to tell you about a research study I am doing. A research study is a special way to find out about something. I am trying to find out more about your 7th grade English Language Arts class. You are being asked to be a part of our study because you are in the 7th grade at Avalon. I would like to study how the 7th grade English Language Arts class at Avalon learns about and makes connections to the community outside of school.

If you want to be a part of this study, here is what will happen:

1. I will come and watch and sometimes video record some of the 7th grade English Language Arts classes and learning activities.
2. I will ask you to talk in an interview. The interviews will not take too long. I will be going to audio record interviews but we will not tell anyone else your answers.
3. I might ask you if I can make some copies of your work. It is okay if you don't want to share, you can just say no.

You can ask questions about this study at any time. If you decide at any time not to finish, you can ask us to stop. The questions we will ask are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign this paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Your signature: _____
Date _____

Your printed name: _____

Appendix D: Rebeka's Interview Transcript

1. **Me:** Alright I am gonna point it a little towards both
2. of us. (.)↑ So you just got finished reading the book
3. called Night↓.
4. **Rebeka:** mmhmm ((nods head in the affirmative))
5. **Me:** how'd you feel about it?
6. **Rebeka:** ((looks up)) Um (.) Its kind of like a weird
7. feeling like um because (...) really really really
8. around (...) but it's horrible horrible topic so I am
9. **Me:** mmhmm ((I affirm several times and need to
- be
10. quiet so I can hear Rebeka speak!))
11. **Rebeka:** I am really interested in the Holocaust just
12. because it's a big part of *my cu..lture*↓ I mean at my
13. Synagogue we talk about it (...) – on certain days
14. not a lot its like what is this so it is really cool it is I
15. really liked it a lot it is really interesting ↓((nodding
16. head in affirmative))
17. **Me:** (...) you wouldn't read it otherwise ((not really
18. what I say here but I am agreeing with her and
19. Rebeka smiles in response)) excited So you
20. mentioned your synagogue do you go to your
21. synagogue a lot
22. **Rebeka:** yeah ((nodding head in affirmative)) *I actually*
23. *am working on a lot of volunteering*=
24. **Me:** =Awesome
25. **Rebeka:** =with the younger kids but lately I haven't been going because this is
26. the first time I ever missed because I've been sick and I don't want to get them
27. sick
28. **Me:** and you said you were having a really busy week
29. **Rebeka:** yeah so I am actually going tonight for my lessons=
30. **Me:** mmhmm
31. **Rebeka:** =in Torah because it is my Bat Mitzvah year
32. **Me:** so exciting
33. **Rebeka:** yeah and very stressful too
34. **Me:** I bet ↑
35. **Rebeka:** Yeah

*Transcriptions Conventions
adapted from DeFina (2011)*

((smiling)) explanatory note

(...) inaudible

(.) pause

↑ rising intonation

↓ falling intonation

- self interruption

= latched utterances by the
same speaker or different
speakers

underline emphatic stress

:: vowel or consonant
lengthening

italics speaker emphases
word

italics bold researcher
emphasizes

36. **Me:** because you have to you have to recite part of the Torah for the Bat Mitzvah
right=
37. **Rebeka:** =yeah yeah =
38. **Me:** (...)
39. **Rebeka:** =7 allias which is 21 verses
40. **Me:** oh my gosh
41. **Rebeka:** if no one helps me
42. **Me:** ((laughing)) if no one helps you oh my gosh
43. **Rebeka:** yeah I mean if you can't learn all of them they get people to check for
44. you
45. **Me:** oh yeah
46. **Rebeka:** yeah it's like whoa
47. **Me:** yeah
48. **Rebeka:** yeah it's a lot
49. **Me:** so for this book you mentioned that I remember in the past you talked about
50. knowing some
51. of the *stories from your family can you talk a little about that*
52. **Rebeka:** yeah um (.) my aunt (.) (.) she was in she lived in Poland↑ I believe well
53. the border kind of changed around well=
54. **Me:** yeah
55. **Rebeka:** =it was Russian Poland that kind of thing and when she was young I
56. think she was
57. *fifteen*↑ I think (.) and she was separated from her family (.) and she was put into
58. a work camp and she me this boy there who was about the same age as her and
59. they fell in love at the camps but then they got separated=
60. **Me:** mmhmm
61. **Rebeka:** = (...) they were both pretty young and they could work so they were
62. just sent to work camps and it was towards the end of the war and both the camps
63. were liberated and they I don't know how but they found each other and they
64. moved to America and got married I believe(...)
65. **Me:** that is such a wonderful story
66. **Rebeka:** and she just passed away this last year
67. **Me:** I am so sorry
68. **Rebeka:** yeah I didn't know her very well she's really funny ((Rebeka is
69. smiling)) she had a really thick thick accent
70. **Me:** Yeah
71. **Rebeka:** yeah she was interesting↓
72. **Me:** Interesting↑
73. **Rebeka:** she doesn't seem like, she wasn't sad she was just kind of like witty she

74. was a lot of fun
75. **Me:** that is amazing that she'd be funny (...) after what she went through=
76. **Rebeka:** = I know, yeah ((shakes head)) I don't know but she was
77. **Me:** she must have been a special person
78. **Rebeka:** yeah but I don't know much about her cause my (...) and I don't know
79. she'd only come down she lived far away I'm not sure where um but she'd like=
80. **Me:** =yeah
81. **Rebeka:** = pulled her sleeve up and I saw her tattoo so I was like why does she
82. have just a bunch of numbers and letters on her arm and I asked my mom and she
83. was like she was in the Holocaust she was in a work camp and so that was the
84. first time that I learned about the horrors of the Holocaust
85. **Me:** do think that made, what you know about your family and from your religion
86. that that made this book more interesting
87. **Rebeka:** (.) (.) (.) yes and (.) no because this topic can be equally as interesting
88. to someone who has no connection to it all
89. **Me:** mmhhmm ((nods head))
90. **Rebeka:** so like I am really interested in this just because it's such a horrible
91. thing and I'd like to learn about it like I don't know why ((smiles)) I like I don't
92. like it but I like to learn about it
93. **Me:** I know what you mean
94. **Rebeka:** and maybe like (.) my religion has something to do with it and how I
95. was raised I have never been sheltered like I've never been sugar coated ((?)) so
96. learning about horrible things and has always been what I like to know about
97. **Me:** mmhmm
98. **Rebeka:** I just don't like to be sheltered from anything not know anything
99. **Me:** yeah I agree I've always been that way too I want to know the truth
100. **Rebeka:** don't want oh everything's fine when I know that not everything is fine
101. **Me:** yeah
102. **Rebeka:** everything that's going on today like there's stuff in Paris and Jews here
103. we're doing the black lives matter *and like everything is going on and I*
104. *want to know about it* and what I can do about it
105. **Me:** mmhmm I agree I think it is really wise so how did you feel a couple
106. of times in class you had to explain some things about the Jewish religion
107. how did that make you feel
108. **Rebeka:** ((shrugs)) I mean I've done it a lot I've I have I mean I have
109. Jewish friends not ones that I see on a daily basis so (...) a lot of people
110. my best friend is has been my best friend since kindergarten
111. **Me:** uh huh
112. **Rebeka:** so I had to explain to her family probably like three times what Passover

113. was
114. **Me:** Oh ((laughing))
115. **Rebeka:** and why cause I sleep over at their house and why I bring my own food
116. **Me:** mmm
117. **Rebeka:** so I had to explain that and like people at school my old school way way
118. back when I was in public school I had to explain to the teachers why I (.) like (.)
119. I had to like a project on my religion we were doing religion projects and I was
120. literally the Jew in my whole school um other people said that I was wrong for
121. being Jewish they thought that I was wrong that what I believed in was wrong like
122. the only one god is not right↑ and I was like ok but I ah had to
123. explain to people like there's a bunch of like Muslims and Christians and I told
124. everyone like I was ok whatever=
125. **Me:** =okay
126. **Rebeka:** but they always ask me why like what god I believed in and I was like I
127. believe in one god and they'd say like is Jesus god and I'd say no not in my
128. religion I don't know so then I'd have to explain to them like holidays and prayers
129. and stuff like I'd be outta school for a day for like for like the New Year or
130. something similar ((grimace)) but one holiday I just wasn't in school
131. and I had to explain to a lot of people why I wasn't in school so I have just been
132. explaining I have like a lot of Christian friends who are non-Jewish and it's not
133. really a big deal
134. **Me:** yeah
135. **Rebeka:** it's not like a shocker or anything
136. **Me:** so what are you going to do your project on
137. **Rebeka:** I'm going to do my project on Dr. Mengling ((Hannah hesitates because
138. she is not sure
139. of the exact name of the Dr. from the book))
140. **Me:** Ok ((shakes head in affirmative))
141. **Rebeka:** what he did (...) he's like my parentes are so surp ahha surprised that I
142. like do so many projects on such dark stuff like my first project ever here was on
143. Sor Day ah I can't remember the full name but it was a little town really small um
144. and it was completely killed off by like Hitler and the Nazis when after DDay
145. they were just leaving
146. **Me:** mmhmm
147. **Rebeka:** and they killed everyone
148. **Me:** yeah
149. **Rebeka:** and they were not even Jews no one had even seen a Nazi til then the
150. whole town everyone was dead except a couple metals ((?)) like (...) it was
151. horrible but like this year my first project was like on serial killers ↑

152. **Me:** I remember you were like yeah for Halloween
153. **Rebeka:** and yeah like ah now I am going to do something like ah this chilling
154. ((shivers)) horrible topic
155. **Me:** Yeah
156. **Rebeka:** (.) it's kind of scary it's interesting to me like it's horrifying it's like uh I just
157. like I've already known how bad people could be so I just want to learn more about it so
158. it doesn't really surprise me people are this bad it's like really interesting to learn about
159. all the horrible things people could do if they
160. are deprived ((?)) of freedom and do whatever they want
161. **Me:** I agree Well thanks for talking with me Is it okay if I talk with you again sometime