

“Can I tell you something?”  
Intentionally Listening to Expressions of Third Grade Children’s Social Identities  
As a Means to Make Classrooms More Culturally Responsive

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom. Your story is part of my social identity. Thank you for teaching me, “Yesterday’s the past, tomorrow’s the future, but today is a gift. That’s why it’s called the present.” Mom, you are still my biggest fan and I continue to feel your support every day. Double rainbow days are my favorite! I love and miss you, and I hope I make you proud!

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## Abstract

A large amount of research has been directed at culturally responsive teaching. This thread of educational research to date has largely focused on teachers who serve populations of students marginalized in schools for reasons such as language, socioeconomic status, and/or ethnic and racial diversity. Scholars offer various definitions and labels of culturally responsive teaching, sharing two prominent goals: 1) to support the achievement of all students, and 2) to utilize effective pedagogical practices in a culturally supported learning environment (Gay, 2002; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). According to Murrell (2009), identity may be influenced by individuals' personal beliefs, reactions to, and impressions of others. The purpose of this study was to better understand how students' social identities were supported through multimodal teaching practices while being engaged in culturally responsive strategies used in classrooms. I examined specific instructional strategies research identified as supportive instructional practices for diverse classrooms. In this study I also sought to understand the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices.

This phenomenological research study used theorists that highlight key ideas of student voice to listen attentively to students' perceptions (Cook-Sather, 2006), culturally responsive teaching to connect students' cultural knowledge and prior experiences to develop a caring learning community (Gay, 2010), multimodal instruction using social and cultural resources (Kress, 2009), and phenomenology and intentionality as an

invisible thread of connection (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). These theorists guided and supported a post-intentional phenomenological approach (Vagle, 2014) through my exploration of the lived classroom experiences of five third graders and their expressions of social identities through language, stories, and other artistic creations. Through the use of students' own voices, I accessed the five-component process from Vagle's (2014) post-intentional phenomenological research design to explore the following three questions: 1) How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom? 2) How do third graders' narratives express equity within culturally responsive teaching and multimodal learning in classrooms? And 3) What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices? Data were collected with a narrative inquiry perspective through classroom visits, observations, co-teaching, and conversations with participants. The data were analyzed using the whole-part-whole phenomenological approach (Vagle, 2014) and following Jackson and Mazzei's (2011) methodological requirements for using thinking with theory to focus on a specific concept from the work of theorists. With my data, I chose to focus on the theorists Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Cook-Sather (2009), Kress (2009), and Gay (2010).

The findings represent five tentative manifestations: interests and abilities, belonging (fitting in), interaction, readers, and challenge. The tentative manifestation *abilities and interest* refers to how participant's perceived personal traits that made them unique and different. Students usually responded by sharing something they were good at

or liked. The second tentative manifestation *belonging* (fitting in) refers to how participants talked about a sense of being a part of their family and school contexts. The third tentative manifestation *interaction* refers to engaging in various contexts including peer-to-peer, students and teachers, with books, and also with elements of technology such as iPads and video games. The fourth tentative manifestation was *readers* and refers to how participants engaged in conversations about books, their feelings about reading, and their experiences with small book groups. The fifth tentative manifestation, identified as *challenge*, refers to expectations, guidance, and guidelines.

Commonalities among participants were revealed through all five tentative manifestations. When culturally responsive teaching and multimodal practices are exhibited, classrooms develop a caring learning community that engages a variety of learners while honoring students' learning styles, lived experiences, and backgrounds (Jones-Walker, 2015). The findings highlight that third graders' social identities give weight to teachers' practice of culturally responsive teaching, especially through multimodal strategies. Culturally responsive teaching needs to help empower the voices of marginalized students in settings that on the surface seem to not involve apparent diversity. Instead, what makes an instructional practice culturally responsive is mirroring students' social identities regularly as part of a routine, with intentionality and consistency.



## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Background to this Dissertation</i> .....	<i>4</i>
<i>Connecting the Personal and the Professional</i> .....	<i>10</i>
<i>My Dissertation Study</i> .....	<i>12</i>
Significance of the Study.....	13
Overview of the Study .....	13
<b>Chapter 2: Identifying a Phenomenon and Literature Review</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<i>Research Component #1: Identify a Phenomenon in its</i> .....	<i>17</i>
<i>Multiple, Partial, and Varied Contexts</i> .....	<i>17</i>
The Research Problem .....	18
<i>Review of the Literature</i> .....	<i>21</i>
Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	26
Social Identity.....	31
Multimodal Instruction .....	35
Student Voice.....	41

	x
Philosophical Conversation.....	44
Statement of Phenomenon (Research Questions) .....	50
Contexts .....	53
Participant Selection .....	57
<b>Chapter 3: Gathering Data.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Research Component #2: Devise a Clear, Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Data</b>	
<b>Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Selecting Data Sources .....	68
<i>Narrative Inquiry Data Sources.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<b>Research Component #3: Make a <i>Post-Reflexion</i> Plan.....</b>	<b>82</b>
Write an “Initial Post-Reflexion Statement” .....	85
<b>Chapter 4: Intentionality, Tentative Manifestations, and Data .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<i>Research Component #4: Read and Write Your Way through Your Data in a Systematic,</i>	
<i>Responsive Manner.....</i>	<i>88</i>
Finding Intentionality.....	89
Seeking Tentative Manifestations .....	90
Tentative Manifestations.....	94
<b>Chapter 5: Thinking with Theory Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<i>Research Component #5: Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the</i>	
<i>phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts.....</i>	<i>138</i>
Re-State the Multiple and Varied Contexts.....	138
<i>Recommendations for Practice .....</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Limitations.....</i>	<i>161</i>

	xi
<i>Future Directions</i> .....	162
<i>Concluding Thoughts</i> .....	164
<b>References</b> .....	<b>166</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>174</b>
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>175</b>
<b>Appendix C</b> .....	<b>177</b>
<b>Appendix D</b> .....	<b>178</b>
<b>Appendix E</b> .....	<b>180</b>

## List of Tables

TABLE 1 <i>STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR DIVERSE STUDENTS</i> .....	35
TABLE 2 <i>PRIMARY TOPICS, DEFINITIONS, AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE</i> .....	43
TABLE 3 <i>SCHOOL REPORT CARD DATA</i> .....	53
TABLE 4 <i>RESEARCH FOCAL PARTICIPANT PROFILES</i> .....	59
TABLE 5 <i>DESCRIPTION OF UNIT PLANS</i> .....	66
TABLE 6 <i>RESEARCHER POST-REFLEXION JOURNAL ENTRY</i> .....	72
TABLE 7 <i>RESEARCHER POST-REFLEXION JOURNAL ENTRY</i> .....	74
TABLE 8 <i>RESEARCHER POST-REFLEXION JOURNAL ENTRY</i> .....	76
TABLE 9 <i>ALIGN DATA SOURCES WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS</i> .....	80
TABLE 10 <i>FOCAL STUDENT NAME TAGS</i> .....	85
TABLE 11 <i>STUDENT GOALS AS WRITTEN BY FOCAL STUDENTS</i> .....	95
TABLE 12 <i>IDENTITY BRAINSTORMING POST-IT NOTES (WRITTEN IN STUDENT TEXT)</i> .....	125
TABLE 13 <i>SUMMARY OF APPLIED THEORISTS, CONCEPTS, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS EXAMINED</i> .....	141
TABLE 14 <i>CROSS-CURRICULAR APPS</i> .....	156
TABLE 15 <i>STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING STANCE</i> .....	160

## List of Figures

<i>FIGURE 1.</i> STUDENT COMPLETED AMERICAN REVOLUTION POSTERBOARD AND WORD BUBBLES .....	71
<i>FIGURE 2.</i> MICHAEL WORKING AT THE BACK TABLE ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION POSTERBOARD.....	71
<i>FIGURE 3.</i> NINE-SQUARE FAMILY QUILT.....	77
<i>FIGURE 4.</i> MAYA'S LETTER .....	78
<i>FIGURE 5.</i> OLIVIA'S ARTWORK .....	79
<i>FIGURE 6.</i> IDENTITY DISCUSSION BRAINSTORM CHART .....	98
<i>FIGURE 7.</i> MAYA'S ALL ABOUT ME FAMILY PAGE.....	100
<i>FIGURE 8.</i> OLIVIA'S ALL ABOUT ME FAMILY PAGE .....	101
<i>FIGURE 9.</i> MICHAEL'S ALL ABOUT ME FAMILY PAGE .....	101
<i>FIGURE 10.</i> COLE WITH THE IPAD .....	105
<i>FIGURE 11.</i> ALVIN HO BRAINSTORMING CHART.....	110
<i>FIGURE 12.</i> FAMILY WORD WEB BRAINSTORM CHART.....	112
<i>FIGURE 13.</i> ROLE-PLAY IMMIGRANT STORYTELLERS .....	114
<i>FIGURE 14.</i> THE BRAVE KNIGHT AND THE FIRE BREATHING DRAGON.....	116
<i>FIGURE 15.</i> OUTDOOR CLASSROOM.....	119
<i>FIGURE 16.</i> THE FAIRY PRINCESS AND THE TEENY MOUSE.....	120
<i>FIGURE 17.</i> IZZY'S LETTER.....	122
<i>FIGURE 18.</i> MITCHELL'S LETTER.....	122
<i>FIGURE 19.</i> IZZY'S TRAITS AND GRAPHIC NOVEL STORY .....	132
<i>FIGURE 20.</i> MATH MODULE 2 MEASUREMENT POSTER.....	135
<i>FIGURE 21.</i> CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	142

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“We have more in common than I thought!”*

Izzy, age 9

*“I don’t know what it says; those are not my words. I don’t know what it all says. I didn’t write it.”* I was sitting down at a table in the back of a third grade classroom working one-on-one with a male student, Michael<sup>1</sup>, who asked me for assistance, and he said the line I quoted above. As a supervisor of teacher candidates, I visited this classroom and observed that the classroom atmosphere was positive on a regular basis. Teaching interruptions were minimal. Students worked independently yet occasionally checked in with peers for validation and encouragement regarding their work. Any interruption typically involved students talking to one another and being very social. The classroom was well supplied with many of the materials needed for academic success. With the room adequately organized and plenty of resources available, students tended to be actively engaged and prepared for the majority of activities and learning tasks. On that particular day, third graders were working on creating American Revolution autobiography posters and were expected to use information from a note-taking sheet completed the day before. This day was dedicated to sketching the outline of the person on the autobiography poster and writing out the speech bubble (dialogue balloons to allow words as a representation for speech, most commonly used in comic books or graphic novels) for upcoming presentations. This project was designed to integrate social

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<sup>1</sup> All names and locations are pseudonyms.

studies with the arts; creative work allowed students to “become” a famous person who was influential during the American Revolution through a posterboard presentation. Students temporarily “became” this person to teach peers about the individual’s importance during the American Revolution. Each student was given a half piece of a white tagboard paper with a large circle cut out near the top; this allowed for their face to pop out of a self-created portrait of a patriot or loyalist. Michael, who spoke the words at the beginning of this paragraph, needed additional support in filling out his note-taking sheet. An assistant in the classroom had helped him the day before, writing in her own words and handwriting. I was sitting at the back table when Michael approached and slammed his paper on the table, sat down, and sighed. He put his elbows on the table, rested his chin in his hands, and with a sad expression asked, “Can you help me?” When I asked Michael what he had for information so far, he responded, “I don’t know what it says; those are not my words. I don’t know what it all says. I didn’t write it.” I understood his frustration; he was trying to express what someone else had told him. The important information had been written for him, and Michael did not have any connection to or understanding of the information. I asked Michael if we could start over; if I could read him the information, and perhaps he could retell the information in his own words and I could write it down. Then he could write what I wrote on the new note-taking sheet that I would provide for him. Michael’s eyes lit up at this idea, and I heard, accompanied by a smile, “Yes, that works better and I will have the same sheet. I will be smart and the same” (Personal interaction). In this scenario, Michael demonstrated a desire for equity and to feel as competent as his peers.

This vignette is an example of adapting instruction for diverse learners. Instructional modifications are not just for struggling students; all students deserve accessible lessons that do not fundamentally alter or lower expectations or standards, but provide equitable opportunities to demonstrate learning. In my vignette one particular student needed language support by being read to and having a discussion of the text and information. Using Michael's spoken words and having me write his words as an example to copy helped support student-centered instruction. Michael was expected to complete the project in his writing, which maintained high expectations for all students and is a characteristic of culturally responsive teaching.

Sonia Nieto (1996) stated, "Why students succeed or fail in school has been the subject of much research and debate, particularly for students whose racial, ethnic, linguistic, or social identity backgrounds differ from that of the dominant group" (p. xix). As I worked with Michael, I thought about how classroom teachers are challenged to educate an increasingly diverse population in today's classrooms and may or may not be equipped with strategies for the range of background experiences and needs they bring. Being a part of this rural third grade classroom, I learned quickly that diversity is more than demographic characteristics. For example, Michael is White and his native language is English. To the teacher he may look like many other students she has had in the past; however, his social identity is quite diverse. Michael needs language and writing support and struggles socially with his peers by exhibiting anxiety behavior presented most often when he is frustrated. Large group instruction does not allow Michael to connect easily with the lesson being taught, yet he seems to work well with small groups. Michael



works more effectively one-on-one, whether it is with a peer, classroom teacher, or another adult in the room. It is clear Michael thrives with personal attention especially with language supports, and he benefits from being in a learning environment in which instruction is presented in more than one sensory mode. Michael has shared with me that his parents are divorced and he divides his time between two homes. As Nieto (2015) suggested, culturally responsive teaching is a mindset that understands and respects student cultures, histories, and experiences. Much of the research focused on culturally responsive teaching has been in urban settings and focuses on race. I believe diversity and culturally responsive teaching go beyond the race, class, and gender constructs to include the contexts of family, community, academic, and social identities as assigned by others or self-assigned.

### **Background to this Dissertation**

As a former elementary classroom teacher, I remember how I tried to create effective learning environments for all the students. Our motto in the classroom was, “personal best.” Everything revolved around those two words. For example, when a student submitted his or her work, I would ask, “Is this your personal best? Why or why not?” When a student’s behavior was not ideal, a fellow student or I would ask, “What can you do to be your personal best?” My philosophy for students and myself focused on a positive mindset, not a deficit one. I encouraged students to use the phrase, “my brain doesn’t think like that” when they were stuck, not understanding material, or required another way of having the material presented. I believed students should not say, “I

can't" because they could find academic and social success in one-way or another, in their own time, academically and socially. I tried to respond in culturally appropriate ways to my students; however, at that point in time my worldview did not make the distinction that students were *being* marginalized. My early career teacher self was focused on how to address and meet the needs of diverse learners, with an understanding of individual differences in classrooms that can be visually apparent, such as gender and physical differences, as well as ability. In a course on diverse children's literature and another course on culturally relevant pedagogy in my doctoral program, I came to understand what it meant for a student to be marginalized.

During my fourth year of teaching, a significant professional development opportunity came when I was asked to attend a weeklong institute for professional development at the University of Virginia Curry School of Education. I was honored to attend the Best Practices Institute, which provided participants an opportunity to gain a foundation in teaching practices. I had just completed my Masters degree program (2002) and my thesis focus was "Providing a Meaningful and Empowering Experience for All Learners, while Schools are Growing More Diverse" (Brennan, 2002, Unpublished Masters Thesis). For my thesis, I had been researching and using differentiation strategies in my classroom and was seeing great success in my teaching and my students' learning. Most of my framework was based on Dr. Carol Tomlinson's work on differentiation. My school district asked me to attend the institute and then provided a professional development day for me to disseminate what I had learned. To this day I keep current on

Tomlinson's approach for responding to the needs of all learners through differentiating instruction.

Currently, I am an assistant professor preparing future early childhood educators. The majority of students I teach are from a fairly homogeneous group that is mainly female, predominantly White and middle-class. Many come from rural households. They reflect the demographics of the teachers in the U.S. many researchers have found (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998). Despite their homogenous backgrounds, these teachers need to be prepared for classrooms that weave together racial, cultural, and socio-economic diversity. In my current work as an assistant professor and supervisor of teacher candidates, I have found mainstream classroom teachers want to work successfully with marginalized students but rarely have had classes, professional development workshops, or other opportunities and experiences to learn and reflect on strategies that respond to students' cultures. Teachers are expected to use culturally responsive teaching practices, yet opportunities for exploring how to do this are often absent from their teacher preparation programs. Echoing my personal experiences, several researchers such as Nieto (1994), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Gay (2000) assert teachers are underprepared for educating marginalized children within their diverse teaching contexts. Students' voices are rarely heard regarding whether the pedagogical practices in their classrooms affirm or negate their social identities and learning. Through my experiences mentoring teacher candidates, I have become more reflective and purposeful in how I teach. I think back to my past teaching experiences and the teaching contexts I see during classroom observations of my students as a way to

inform my research goals. Through my doctoral courses at the university, theories have been coming to life through journaling, observation, and discussions; all of these have supported my research agenda.

As a supervisor of teacher candidates, I have read many reflective journals written by teacher candidates that inspire me and have helped inform my dissertation study. For instance, I assigned narrative writing in individual journals so my teacher candidates would engage in written reflection that might lead to class discussions to help develop their understanding of the important role of culture and diversity on student learning. One of the first prompts I ask teacher candidates to respond to is “What is diversity to you?” A teacher candidate, Allie, first reflected diversity was an “understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. Diversity is the acceptance and respect of all people.” By the end of her student teaching she had expanded her thinking to “diversity is understanding, recognizing, and incorporating different cultures and lifestyles into not only your teaching but into your life. You can gain so much insight and ideas by being open-minded to others.” Each semester I read about new family dynamics and economic situations teacher candidates encounter with their students (e.g., families with same sex parents, grandparents as guardians, mixed and blended families, families having foster parents or siblings, parents who are incarcerated, and homeless families) that are new to them. Allie’s reflection journal continues to stand out to me, even though it is from a few years ago. Allie confessed she was really struggling with connecting with her cooperating teacher, mainly because she was disagreeing with many stereotypical biases the classroom teacher expressed to the

students. For example, Mrs. Potter, a kindergarten teacher, continued to call the apricot crayon from the Crayola crayon box, the “skin color” crayon. The following is another example, taken from Allie’s journal:

Another day, Mrs. Potter was explaining the expectations of the dramatic play area and when she came to the jewelry drawer she posed a question to the class: “Now, do boys wear earrings?” “YES” the class responded nearly in complete unison. Mrs. Potter seemed appalled by their answer and quickly retorted, “NO! Boys do not wear earrings. These are for girls to wear.” One little boy was quick to blurt, “But my daddy has his ear pierced.” Mrs. Potter said, “Well that’s different. Boys don’t wear earrings.” (Allie’s reflection journal entry)

This classroom Allie was student teaching in is situated in a rural area where the majority of the families are comprised of a mom, dad, and a few (usually two) siblings. This particular classroom teacher told Allie there was not a lot of diversity in their school and community. While that may be the teachers’ perspective according to how she defined diversity, to teach in a culturally responsive approach, a teacher should prepare all students for a multicultural world.

In addition to my role as an assistant professor, my identity includes that of motherhood, my most important and favorite role. Motherhood supports my social identity as well as expands my understanding of diversity. With four children under the age of 15, I am reminded daily of the importance of equity and identity. I see quite a few similarities in my children, yet they each have a unique personality that makes them who they are.

My oldest daughter, Sydney (14), is very spirited, caring, and determined. She holds high expectations for herself and is very independent and responsible. She is such a hard worker but doesn't want every one to know; she is quite a leader but would really prefer to not be labeled as such unless it is on the basketball court. She is an excellent storyteller and usually has a book close by her at all times.

My only son, Sam (12), is very kindhearted, sensitive, and is a quiet leader who is independent and holds himself to high expectations but doesn't want to let on he does, or how easy academics can be for him. He is also quite funny and likes to share facts and provide brainteasers to get people thinking.

Sonja (6), my third child, is very creative, moves at her own pace, internalizes everything around her, and often leaves one to wonder, "What is she thinking?" She also is a fact sharer, and I find myself asking, "Where did she learn that?" One of my favorite things Sonja shared is when she said; "I think I have a unicorn in the middle of my heart. I love them so much!" Yes, she believes unicorns are real!

Stella (5), my youngest daughter, is strong-willed, needs some form of touch daily, and thrives on being close to people. She really enjoys being in the middle of everything and is quite active when permitted to be. She is caring and giving. When we were practicing counting, Stella said, "Let's practice counting by 5's to 100 by skipping, Mom. Come on, let's go!"

From a parental perspective, I try to encourage my children to be individuals and support their uniqueness. We talk about character traits, being a well-rounded person, and with my husband I am able to provide various experiences and opportunities to help

support them becoming well-rounded people. I see the grit they all have and how vulnerable they can be. All have a sense of inner motivation yet thrive when others around them acknowledge their gifts. I know how they present themselves at home, in public, and even sometimes at school when I volunteer. I see what traits they try to hide from others (how intelligent they really are) and ones they try to showcase (their athletic ability). From an educator's perspective, I wonder how their teachers really know who they are, especially some of their more silent character traits. These special traits make them individuals yet maybe don't help them fit in with the crowd. I wonder if their teachers know their cultural background, histories, and experiences? What do they know about our family? And most importantly, do teachers use the personal information to improve how they individualize their teaching?

### **Connecting the Personal and the Professional**

Through observations, teacher candidate reflective journals, and personal experiences, I wondered what young children would share about their diverse backgrounds and how they felt about school. Through my study I set out to understand students' expressions of their social identity roles and relationships and connect these to artifacts of culturally responsive pedagogy in practice. My dissertation research attended to students' perceptions, voices, and their contributions, as seen through artistic expressions, language, and storytelling. I used a third grade classroom in my effort to identify student voice as a means of challenging traditional and conventional roles in education. To reflect the reality of decision-making and planning classroom teachers take part in, I intentionally took a more

integrated look at the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices.

With the experiences of classroom teaching, teaching future teachers, doctoral study, parenting, and learning from the world around me, I continue to reflect on how educators can best teach all students. The experiences I shared in this chapter led me to question how I perceive identity, and what it means to respect social identities. What makes up a diverse classroom? For my study, I wanted to explore how students express their social identity. I also wondered how classroom teachers honor the diverse social identities of their students, as children can and do have multiple social identities, self-assigned as well as assigned by others. Who students are at school can vary from who they are at home, for example. How do I define diverse and diversity as a whole context? As an educator and beginning researcher, I view expressions of identity as a story or narrative that can illuminate the way one can organize and understand experiences.

Social identities include beliefs, assumptions, and biases about the world and how those influence an individual. Children begin to form their identity situated among the contexts of family, community, education, and/or the world (Katz, 1982). Opportunities, relationships, expectations, and empowerment support social identity development as well as lived experiences. When I was developing my research agenda, I focused on my interests and experiences, as well as reviewed gaps in research. I began to explore social identity characteristics and how understanding positions of others may influence children's understanding and responsiveness to others.



### **My Dissertation Study**

The purpose of my study was to participate in the lived classroom experiences of students during classroom instruction in a third grade classroom setting and think deeply about social identity, building personal connections through literacy and narrative storytelling, as reflecting upon how particular teaching practices support cultural responsiveness. The goal of my study was to modify practices and activities within a classroom to become a more responsive environment, building a bridge between home culture and school culture and supporting social identities. I make the case that culturally responsive teaching is incredibly worthy; however, cultural diversity includes race but also gender, native languages, social class, as well as ability and must be a paramount concern of culturally responsive classrooms. My research in a rural school extends current research beyond race in urban contexts.

I chose to learn from student voices as a pedagogical practice that supports the potential of cultural responsiveness. As Cook-Sather (2015) suggested, “Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling, and their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults, and they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education” (p. 383). In my classroom experiences, when students’ perspectives are authenticated, attention to student voice may validate their classroom identity. When I have encouraged individuals to view themselves as producers of knowledge, student voice is represented. Student voice can support understanding of instructional practices, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and cultural identity. Cook-Sather (2009) maintained, “Remembering students’

experience, really listening to them, and taking their perspectives seriously all allow teachers to create classrooms in which students are active partners not only in dialogue, but also in learning” (p. 179).

### **Significance of the Study**

As a pedagogical approach, culturally responsive teaching affirms students’ identities and backgrounds and provides a means for students to “maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). To date, however, there are limited resources for accessing student voices related to the practices that should be taking place in the schools. The objective of education is not solely to transfer intellectual knowledge from teacher to student, nor is it simply to impose values and encourage social development. As I set out on this research study, I hoped my study would provide information on how culturally responsive teaching practices are currently being utilized in the classroom and how those practices validate students’ social identities, from students’ perspectives. Additionally, through my study I planned to review how particular teaching strategies and practices allow students to feel their social identities were viewed as an asset. The challenge to support students’ identities in diverse classrooms is great, and the importance of teachers thinking about how their practices influence students from diverse backgrounds is critical. I set out with my study to utilize young children’s narratives and document their lived classroom experiences.

### **Overview of the Study**

To tackle the subject I have presented, I applied two methodologies: post-intentional phenomenology and narrative inquiry. Data collection was gathered through

student voice to translate the meaning of commitments and reposition students in educational research. I set out to investigate the phenomenon, expressions of social identity through narrative storytelling, to commit to understanding culturally responsive teaching from student perspectives. Entering post-intentional phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and student voice traditions gave privilege to student experiences in my research design. I wanted to recognize that shared experiences contribute to the understanding of stories of culture, family, and background, while using narrative inquiry to emphasize support through classroom instructional practices. Student voice was used to juxtapose the power in the classroom by listening to voices of young children and finding value in their perspective.

To design my post-intentional phenomenological research study, I followed the five-component approach Vagle (2014) outlined to establish a methodological process. Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I work through research component 1: Identify a phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts. I contextualized my study within research on culturally responsive teaching practices, their integral role in schools, and their theoretical underpinnings. In Chapter 2, I situate the research problem through a review of the literature connected to my conceptual framework, phenomenology, and within the fields of social identity and culturally responsive teaching in elementary classrooms. I also articulate that my study will make contributions to the elementary classroom by situating the contexts where I believe the phenomenon resides and my relationship with the phenomenon. I conclude chapter 2 with the participant selection and description of my five focal participants.

Post-intentional phenomenology research component 2: Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering data appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation will be shared in Chapter 3. I enter the methodology traditions of post-intentional phenomenology and narrative inquiry to gain student perspectives through storytelling. I set out to maintain open communication between students and their teachers to provide evidence of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice. I explore post-intentional phenomenology's viability as a tool for studying the classroom practices from the point of view of students and how those practices influence students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, in the chapter, I describe the data sources and align the data sources with research questions, while also explaining an analysis process that led to findings. In Chapter 3, I include research component 3: Make a *Post-Reflexion* Plan; I share my positionality while acknowledging the pedagogy and implementation of culturally responsive practices through the lens of social identities of five third grade students' narratives. I focus on what is going on in the classroom and how those experiences affected student's daily experiences and their social identities. Through observation, artifact collection, student discussions, and co-teaching, I disclose opportunities and boundaries between students and teachers in a diverse classroom. Within the chapter, an analysis of the data allowed me to identify the tentative manifestations that explore the changing, shifting nature of the intentional relationships associated with the phenomenon, expressions of social identity.

In Chapter 4 I share research component 4: Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner, through discussion of the narrative

representation of the research findings. I follow Jackson and Mazzei's (2011) methodological requirements for using thinking with theory analysis with the five tentative manifestations of the phenomenon that I identified.

To conclude my dissertation, in Chapter 5 I communicate research component 5: Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts using narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The research findings weave authentic and convincing narratives from participants' lived classroom experiences in a diverse classroom environment. These narratives help me craft a text that captures the tentative manifestations of the phenomenon of expressions of social identity in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts. I include five tentative manifestations: abilities and interest, belonging, interaction, challenge, and readers. Vagle (2014) stated, "Write around the grey areas-whatever they might come to be-and amplify the explosive lines of flight" in regard to tentative manifestations (p. 136). An analysis of the identified tentative manifestations using thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2011) is examined. This chapter also includes implications, future directions for further inquiry, and concluding thoughts.

## **Chapter 2: Identifying a Phenomenon and Literature Review**

*“It’s easier to play an animal than another person. Everyone likes animals.”*

Michael, age 9

In this chapter I share how I identified a phenomenon in multiple, partial, and varied contexts, through working with five focal children. I provide in the first section why this study was important to me through a statement of the research problem. I then present a review of relevant literature to position my research with existing scholarly work. I follow with a philosophical conversation focusing on post-intentional phenomenology first and foremost. I embrace Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) perception work, while I use data collection practices of narrative inquiry. Next, I share my research questions focusing on students’ experiences with multimodal instructional practices used to help develop an understanding of social identities and centered on the lived experience of culturally responsive teaching as a third grade student in a diverse classroom. To conclude this chapter, I position the phenomenon within the contexts I believe it resided during my study and demonstrate how it was evident in the expressions of social identities of the five focal participants.

### **Research Component #1: Identify a Phenomenon in its**

#### **Multiple, Partial, and Varied Contexts**

Ever-evolving theories have seeped into the education landscape and suggested teaching with a multimodal and culturally responsive approach is effective for all students (e.g., Gay, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1996;

Villegas & Lucas, 2007). How do elementary educators approach culturally responsive teaching within their classroom settings? Specifically, how does a third grade teacher negotiate experiences in the classroom that value the social identities of the students served? Teachers should proceed from the context of the lives and knowledge of the students in each individual classroom to create effective learning spaces for students who have traditionally been both left out and marginalized by the curriculum (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1996). Students rarely have a voice regarding their viewpoints on the usefulness of these pedagogical practices and whether the strategies assist in their social identity development in the classroom (Cook-Sather, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Howard, 2001; Nieto, 1994).

### **The Research Problem**

We live in a global society that continues to undergo extraordinary change, creating more diverse classrooms. Researchers have provided suggestions as to how teachers should teach and interact with students as they enact culturally relevant practices (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1996). However, most of this research work has been conducted in urban schools with an emphasis on race. I framed my dissertation study with the belief that an emphasis beyond race is needed and, with the intersections of race/ethnicity/culture, should also consider socio-economic status, language, ability, giftedness, religion, sexual orientation, and gender. All classrooms need teachers who understand their personal biases and are there to cultivate the learning potential of all students in their classrooms.

As Jiménez (2000) reinforced, an important thread of educational research has identified instructional practices that motivate, challenge, and provide successful learning experiences for students. A number of influential researchers have studied and documented that students' respond positively when teachers demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their language and culture, especially when instruction has been designed to build on culturally familiar activities (Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2013). Though much scholarship on culturally responsive teaching exists (e.g., Gay, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2007), more work must be done to showcase the instructional practices needed in classrooms. Many research studies share specific instructional practices needed in the classrooms for diverse learners yet lack empirical evidence from student perspectives (e.g., Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004; Jones-Walker, 2015; Kurawa, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2013; Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013). To bring student voice to the forefront of this research, I explored a post-intentional phenomenological methodology through narrative storytelling. This research allowed me to spend time in a third grade classroom, in a rural K-5 school building in the Midwest, where I was able to co-plan and co-teach with a veteran teacher.

Exploring students' experiences through their storytelling voice is well matched to phenomenological research. A phenomenology methodology allowed for total immersion with the experiences of young children to gather rich descriptive data from a student perspective and to articulate tentative manifestations of a phenomenon by maintaining intentional relationships in the classroom. As Bruner (1996) stated, "It is



through our own narratives humans principally construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it is through its narrative a culture provides models of identity and agency to its members” (p. xiv). According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), teachers who utilize culturally relevant pedagogy assume all students are capable of achieving academic success, affirm students' cultures, and foster critical consciousness that challenges the status quo. Teachers can then create collaborative and connected learning communities based on equitable and reciprocal relationships. To create effective learning spaces for students who have traditionally been both left out and marginalized by the curriculum, teachers can proceed from the context of the lives and knowledge of the students in each classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994). While culturally responsive teaching cannot be prescribed or formulaic, educators can learn from various methods and strategies teachers use. Culturally responsive teaching is not a scripted curriculum, but there are various methods and strategies to support diverse learners (Gay, 2002).

To situate my research study, I began wondering about diverse classrooms in rural areas and the teachers who work in them. How do current classroom teachers engage with students when enacting culturally relevant practices? What instructional practices are utilized to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of students’ languages and cultures? How do teachers take notice of students’ social identities and include that information in their classroom community and teaching? These questions, as well as many others, are important for marginalized groups of students and the call for implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. Talking with many teachers, I have learned it is expected for teachers to become *culturally responsive teachers*. The

Department of Instruction in the state of Wisconsin expects teachers to provide a culturally responsive environment and adapt instruction for diversity of race, language, and culture to prepare students for a multicultural world. Furthermore, many teachers are being required to document how their classroom supports diverse learners through culturally responsive teaching practices. Research states it is imperative for teachers to provide culturally responsive classrooms, given how diverse classrooms have become (Gay, 2013; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2001). However, if educators are interested in maintaining culturally responsive classrooms, they must consider how diversity can be seen as an asset in classroom relationships (Gay, 2013; Nieto, 2013). In other words, I believe educators must take time to listen intentionally from student perspectives about how their social identities can be supported in the classroom. In order to identify what culturally responsive teaching is and how that pedagogy connects with students' social identities, I situated the above questions in existing scholarly research.

### **Review of the Literature**

As Vagle (2010) suggested, “The primary goal in post-intentional phenomenology is to capture tentative manifestations of the phenomenon as it is lived-not use existing theories to explain or predict what might take place. So, situate the phenomenon, but do not spend a lot of time building a literature case” (p. 124). I agree with Vagle; it is relevant to bring literature from the field to gain clarity of the phenomenon prior to data collection. My study explored expressions of social identities through language, stories, and other artistic creations and examined the relationship between culturally responsive and multimodal instructional practices. Specifically, I asked, “What instructional

practices support social identities in the classroom and how do students' perceptions shared through a storytelling voice (narratives) regarding their social identities validate those practices?" To establish the significance of this study, I completed a review of the relevant research before data collection in order to provide orientation with the phenomenon expressions of social identity. First, I explored culturally responsive teaching as the theoretical framework. I then reviewed literature on social identity, multimodal instructional strategies, and student voice. In this section of my dissertation, I share relevant research relating to the intersecting topics of culturally responsive teaching, storytelling (narratives), identity, and diversity.

I used two methods to find literature for this review. First, I reviewed the theoretical framework and theories of *culturally relevant pedagogy* and/or education, *culturally responsive teaching*, *culturally and linguistically relevant teaching*, *cultural competence*, and *diversity in education*. I defined my search parameters by an overview of original findings of effective instructional practices focusing on social identity of young children with attention to culturally responsive teaching and multimodal practices, specifically in first, second, and third grades. I completed an extensive search of the literature by a full text search of all applicable research databases with more than 100 combinations of terms. Additional search procedures I completed consisted of using titles and keywords; the advanced search options to limit results; the "find similar articles" feature; as well as by cross-referencing articles in research studies and published books. Applying these procedures, I searched the following databases: JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, Education Source, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Keywords and search terms

utilized included *instructional practices, multimodal, teaching methods, best practices, culturally responsive, culturally relevant, multicultural, and teaching methods*. I then used the terms *identity, equity, disposition*, as well as *teacher student relationship* to narrow the results. I searched *primary grades, elementary, young children, and first through third grades* to specialize on the lower elementary age group. I began by viewing articles in peer-reviewed journals whose abstracts indicated instructional practices for diverse learners were included.

The second method I used to identify relevant literature was to review the bibliographies of my initial sources to lead me to new sources. After an extensive search, I discovered very little research specifically addressed instructional practices that help students to express their social identities in their classrooms. Rather, the majority of the research addressed criteria for supporting culturally relevant pedagogy, such as classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and cultural identity. Thus, I expanded my search to include literature using the following terms: *teachers in the primary grade classrooms, multicultural teaching, student voice, sense of belonging in classrooms, student-centered teaching, caring classrooms, and identity safe classrooms*.

As I conducted my review, it was difficult to evaluate which practices have been most effective for primary grade students because the bodies of research on instructional practices were based more on theory than on data. Of the many studies I reviewed, 17 could be categorized into four emerging themes in education research that intersected with my dissertation study: culturally responsive teaching, social identity, multimodal instruction, and student voice. Finding these themes allowed me to identify aspects of my

topic that have already been studied, as well as build on the findings and methodological processes researchers have used. I found the most common methodologies used were case study, ethnography, and action research through qualitative data collection measures such as observation, field notes, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The studies I reviewed were limited in relation to how culturally responsive instructional practices increased students' expression of their social identities in the classroom, especially from a student perspective. Few of the studies reported well-defined findings using data evaluation of instructional practices that supported students' expression of social identity. The themes of culturally responsive teaching, social identity, multimodal instruction, and student voice within the literature I reviewed highlighted preliminary key findings for me to take into consideration. The key findings and implications showed particular themes supported students' feelings of belonging in their classroom settings, while highlighting exemplary instructional practices over time. Another implication in the research was feelings of belonging could be interconnected to identity safety. Having students feel as though their social identities were being used as a resource for learning helped form positive student relationships and promoted autonomy and student voice in the classroom.

Teachers are faced with educating an increasingly diverse population in today's classrooms, yet few teachers are prepared with effective strategies for teaching diverse students (Ryan, Ackerman, & Song, 2005). Au (2006) acknowledged instructional practices and content of instruction that guide the classrooms in the U.S. attempt to be culturally responsive, yet they are typically only responsive and relevant to the dominant mainstream culture. Students differ in their race, ethnicity, gender, native languages,

social class, religion, sexual orientation, and ability and rarely have a voice in the research being conducted. They also have little opportunity to express their viewpoints on the value of particular pedagogical practices and whether the strategies support their social identities in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (1995a) stated that for students to succeed academically, the use of personal stories does support culturally responsive pedagogy by developing or maintaining cultural competence; as well, affirming cultural identities help foster a sense of community. Nieto (1994, 2013) elaborated an essential element of culturally relevant pedagogy involves listening attentively to the voice of students and their contributions. Gay (2013) suggested the “most powerful evidence of teaching effectiveness is the personal story” (p. xxii). The story becomes powerful when one has the ability, stance, and inclination to tell the story. The people and their lives are at the heart of any story. Therefore, an emphasis on providing opportunities, instructional practices, and dialogue that is supportive of diverse students continues to be a researchable area within education, especially through personal narratives or stories.

The field of research on culturally responsive instructional practices is relatively theory-based. Researchers such as Hollie (2012), Nieto (2013), and Vasquez (2010) have published books and resources to put instructional strategies that support culturally and linguistically relevant theories into practice. Culturally responsive teaching is not a perfect formula consistent in every classroom, but there are various methods and strategies to support diverse learners. Nieto (2015) indicated culturally responsive teaching is not a specific set of strategies pre-determined, nor is there a curriculum to follow, and it is not just for some students. Culturally responsive teaching is found in

classrooms that encompass the point of view of different students, while using diverse materials and activities as resources.

In this literature review, I define culturally responsive teaching and describe findings that demonstrate instructional practices to help young children support their social identities, explicitly concentrating on work done in first through third grade classrooms. Specifically, I provide a review of foundational and current scholarship to illustrate the perspective of culturally diverse instruction in relation to: 1) nurturing social identities; 2) enriching instructional practices through multimodalities, particularly focusing on language and literacy development; and 3) reinforcing equity through student narratives and student voice.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

A large amount of research has been directed at culturally responsive teaching. This thread of educational research to date has largely focused on teachers who serve populations of students marginalized in schools for reasons such as language, socioeconomic status, and/or ethnic and racial diversity. Scholars offer various definitions and labels of culturally responsive teaching, sharing two prominent goals: 1) to support the achievement of all students, and 2) to utilize effective pedagogical practices in a culturally supported learning environment (Gay, 2002; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Several theories and practices of multicultural education promote equity and achievement in academics for diverse student groups. As Ladson-Billings (2004) noted, a variety of labels often are used interchangeably to gain equity between students' home culture and school, including

“culturally appropriate” (Au & Jordan, 1981), “culturally congruent” (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), “culturally responsive” (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982), “culturally compatible” (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987), and, more currently, “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (Paris, 2012). Gay (2010) stated, “Culturally responsive teaching is about teaching, and the teaching of concern is that which centers classroom instruction in multiethnic cultural frames of reference” (p. xxiii).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) positions culture, language, and background of students at the forefront of the classroom (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). The purpose of CRP is to affirm students’ identities and backgrounds, and thereby provide a means for students to “maintain their cultural identity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). Focusing on successful teachers of African-American students, Ladson-Billings (1995a) found three broad themes. The teachers: a) viewed themselves and students as capable and considered themselves part of the community, b) developed strong and positive classroom communities focusing on collaborative learning and connectedness, and c) conceived knowledge as active and shared while applying multiple forms of assessment. Ladson-Billings (1995b) also emphasized the importance for teachers to “problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society” (p. 483).

In a parallel approach, building off of Ladson-Billings’ work, Gay (2000) outlined five elements of what she labeled as culturally responsive teaching “to empower ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy” (p. 111). The elements are: “developing a knowledge base about cultural



diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Thus, culturally responsive teaching recognizes, respects, and uses students’ identities and backgrounds as meaningful sources for creating inclusive learning environments (Nieto, 2012).

According to Hollie (2012), culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy is about supporting students through their cultural and linguistic dominant language for the goal of academic success. Hollie (2012) implemented the term *culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy* (CLR) for the following intentions to:

Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy focuses on culture, language, gender, class and religion anthropologically based rather than on race. Linguistic identity is a crucial aspect of who we are, and to concentrate on pedagogy versus teaching and learning so that pedagogy emphasizes the how and why of teaching, the strategic use of methods, and the rationale behind why instructional decisions are made. (2012, p. 20)

Nieto (2016) stated culturally responsive teaching is about pedagogy, whereas culturally relevant pedagogy is about curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching pedagogy is relating to student experiences, having honest conversations, and believing in students’ intelligence. Students from diverse language backgrounds are expected to effectively learn and use a new language, as well as exercise new cultural dispositions effectively. Because language and culture are intertwined, language is a way of

communicating cultural and personal identity and socializes one into a cultural group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). The link between culture and classroom instruction is derived from evidence that cultural practices shape student-thinking processes, which serve as tools for learning within and outside of school (Nieto, 1996). As Villegas and Lucas (2007) stated,

The immigrant student population has also grown significantly in the past 30 years. Currently, one in five students speaks a language other than English at home, and the majority of these students are learning English as a second language in school. Therefore, schools, districts, and states are beginning to respond by centering their work on culturally responsive practices. (p. 5)

Despite the differences in defining cultural pedagogy, scholars share common assumptions to support diverse students in the classroom. Students' cultural heritage needs to be respected, celebrated, and included in the classroom curriculum (Gay, 2002). Linking students' experiences at home and at school encourages classroom interactions that support topics relevant to students while also maintaining home language and culture (Nieto, 2013). Maintaining CRT pedagogy also can promote social justice with an emphasis on equality.

Today's world "demands a new way of looking at teaching grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning" (Villegas & Lucas, 2007, p. 29). The concept of culturally responsive teaching has gained increased attention over the past decade as a way to rethink instructional practices and improve the educational

performances of all students (Gay, 2010). As Au and Mason (1981) suggested, pedagogy should emphasize the relationship between instructional improvement and the understanding and representation of the cultural background of students. Numerous studies have been conducted on the relationship between various aspects of instructional practices and cultural pedagogy (Gay, 2000, 2010; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008; Nieto, 1994, 1996, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2007, 2013).

For my study I utilized Gay's concept and terminology of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as it positions culture, language, and background as important to developing a caring learning community within the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching does not just involve teaching students of diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, but it intends to encompass student and family diversity as well, preparing students for a multicultural world (Hollie, 2012). Moll (2000) stated, "The emphasis, then, is on connecting our ideas of culture with empirically grounded knowledge, not handed to the teachers by academics but developed firsthand through their own inquiry about a group of people and their lived experiences, and what their everyday life is all about" (p. 262). The term *diverse* will be used throughout this study to refer to students who may be "distinguished [from the mainstream culture] by ethnicity, social class, and/or racial/ethnic minority groups, students whose primary language is not English, and students who are from low-income or poor households" (Perez, cited in Terry & Irving (2010, p. 6).

## **Social Identity**

Similar to culturally relevant pedagogy, social identity has various theoretical stances and methodologies, as well as being critiqued and re-defined. Tajfel (1978, 1981), a social psychologist, proposed a conceptual framework that defined social identity as part of an individual's self-concept developed by group membership. As McIntyre (1997) recalled, social identity is not static but depends on aspects of the particular intergroup an individual feels they belong to. This is extremely important in the case of classroom environment.

Gay (2000) suggested culturally responsive teaching should focus on “teaching to and through strengths of students...and is culturally validating and affirming” (p. 29). Educators should be aware of the unique backgrounds and lived experiences students bring to the classroom and classroom community. Classrooms need to address each student's sense of belonging and recognize learning as a social process. Stets and Burke (2000) suggested social identity theory “categories or groups,” and identity theory “roles” should be reflexive and merged (p. 224). Children's attitudes change and shape the classroom; while teachers also influence children's attitudes. Social identity theory does not suggest age-linked developmental changes in children's attitudes yet recognizes the powerful role students and teachers maintain in shaping the classroom (McNamara, 1997). Identity is functional with interaction between characteristics and situations. Much of social identity supports the notion of intergroup relations and how children see themselves as a member of a group. Sharing similar perspectives and finding commonalities provide meaning to personal identity. Stets and Burke (2000) stated

through self-categorization, viewing oneself as members of the same social category, identities are formed. Connolly (2000) maintained childhood identities constructed around race and gender such as black or white and/or boys or girls are not fixed universal categories or essential. An understanding of the awareness that “there is nothing natural or inevitable about the ways in which race, gender, and childhood manifest themselves in young children’s lives” allowed research to focus on negotiating attitudes and identities (p. 174). This indicates children’s language use, conceptual meanings, and social interactions, and the connections between people have significance in social identities (Christensen, 2004).

Children continuously construct and elaborate their ideas about their own and others racial/cultural identities and their feelings about human differences (Katz, 1982). Research in child development, as well as in feelings, attitudes, and development of ethics, have been published in documents, reports, and studies (e.g., Derman-Sparks et.al, 1989; Eccles, 1999; Katz, 1982; Ramsey, 1998). As Katz (1982) stated, development during primary grade levels (ages 6-10 and grades Kindergarten through third grade) shifts from individual identity to include a group identity, while children begin to understand their identity includes many different aspects (gender, ethnicity, and class).

Identity has a significant influence on how one perceives others, one’s self-esteem, self-confidence, aspirations, motivation, and effort expended in various aspects of one’s life (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). According to Murrell (2009), identity may be more influenced by what others believe about us, their impressions of us, and how they react to our actions. Murrell (2009) also emphasized that

identity processes and social environments in schools promote identity development and position identity into three categories: actions students make, decisions students make, and how others respond to students as a result. Seidl (2007) suggested the mentality of “just like me” makes it challenging for White teachers to consider how relevant teaching for other cultures takes shape. As educators, it is significant to recognize everyone has social identities, and teachers must understand their own social identities to recognize the lenses through which we see other people, including our students (Schmidt, 1999). Teachers can express value to a student’s social identity by keeping the student’s life integrated in the curriculum frequently, infrequently, or in superficial ways. The most responsive way to accomplish frequent integration is to understand students’ lives outside of school, and not from a biased standpoint (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a). Milner (2008) affirmed that students benefit from honoring and building on the lived experiences and cultural backgrounds of one another and, in turn, that this process makes learning more meaningful while supporting social identity development.

Differences being viewed as assets rather than from a deficit perspective can open the opportunity for caring learning communities where individuals and heritages are valued (Nieto, 2013). Hefflin (2002) supported the idea that instruction should align with students’ personal lives and when instruction draws on interest, experiences, and meaningful personal connections, opportunities for all students are created. In agreement with Hefflin, Gay (2010) suggested cultural backgrounds should guide curriculum, instructional strategies, relationships, and in turn mediate power imbalances to validate all students in the classroom. Jones-Walker (2015) acknowledged, “We must take into

account the social identities of the learner (for example, race/ethnicity, class, gender) in order to produce successful outcomes for students” (p. 4). Implications for instructional practices that provide students various opportunities to explore aspects of their social identities allow for conceptualizing identity as a space where home and school selves might be validated (McCarthy, 2001).

Research and classroom work on identity safety has been a focus to “help teachers examine their practice from the point of view of each of their students” (Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013, p. 4). Souto-Manning (2013) suggested teachers need to recognize all students are cultural beings, and their social identities should be considered an asset to be valued within the classroom and curriculum. Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013) and Jones-Walker (2015) concurred there are several effective practices linked to students feeling a sense of belonging in school. These practices provide opportunities essential for conceptualization of self with a view of multiple identities, while focusing on identity work in the classroom. Steele and Cohn-Vargas (2013) examined 84 elementary schools for a yearlong study and from data determined identity safe classrooms focused on four domains working together: trust, autonomy, belonging, and high competence. Within the four domains, four practices were suggested for all students: 1) Student-centered teaching; 2) cultivating diversity as a resource; 3) classroom relationships; and 4) caring classroom environments. Steele and Cohn-Vargas’ work was based on the assumption teachers want the best for students, want to be fair, and educators often do not recognize a connection between students’ social and cognitive development (2013).

## Multimodal Instruction

Bezemer and Kress (2008) defined mode as a “socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making” (p. 171). Siegel (2006) suggested children are naturally multimodal and make meaning through modes such as talk, gesture, drama, and drawing. To focus on students’ viewpoint and social identities, there are child-centered practices “essential in diverse classrooms to teach students that who you are and what you think are important to the learning process” (Steele, 2012, p. 1126). Foundational scholars (Gay, 2010; Hollie, 2012; Vasquez, 2010) suggested several strategies identified to support instructional practices (Table 1) to help culturally and linguistically diverse young children. Conversely, these strategies are supported through theory and not with data-specific studies to validate and increase children’s feelings of inclusion.

Table 1  
*Strategies/Activities Identified to Support Instructional Practices for Diverse Students*

Domain:	Strategies and Activities:
Oral Language (Listening and Speaking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling using wordless pictures</li> <li>• Traditional songs, chants, rhymes in students’ home language</li> </ul>
Reading Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared reading with patterned language books</li> <li>• Scaffolding retelling</li> <li>• Text sets</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided writing</li> <li>• Interactive writing</li> <li>• Collaborative writing</li> <li>• Independent writing</li> <li>• Author’s chair</li> </ul>
Manipulatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objects used as teaching tools</li> <li>• Hands-on</li> <li>• Observe, model, and internalize abstract concepts</li> </ul>



Cross-Language Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word Wall</li> <li>• Similarities and Differences</li> <li>• Bilingual Books</li> </ul>
Connections to home and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Autobiographies and personal narratives</li> <li>• Books created in home language</li> </ul>

Other researchers have found instructional approaches have proven effective for diverse young children. For example, Helman and Burns (2008) suggested instructional practices tailored to support oral and written language of students would be more effective than not acknowledging students' background experiences. When teachers use various strategies to include students' knowledge and experiences, a sense of belonging fosters acceptance for social identities. With a sense of belonging, active participation increases and students feel more connected to their peers in diverse classrooms. For example, studies have demonstrated explicit teaching, cooperation, small group interaction, modeling and scaffolding, as well as strong expectations proved that diversity in language, culture, ability, and personal experience are supported within primary grade classrooms (Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Ryder, Burton, & Siberg, 2006).

Gersten, Baker, Haager, and Graves (2004) were concerned about literacy instruction in first grade classrooms of English learners by exploring the relationship between teaching practice and growth in reading. Specifically, these researchers examined six clusters, coming from the English Language Learner Classroom Observation Instrument, which they determined was a helpful tool in supporting aspects

of effective teaching for all students, including English learners, with some adjustment of instruction required. In order to analyze the quality of instruction, these researchers used four sources to build the observation instrument: “1) studies on the effective teaching of beginning reading, 2) observational studies of reading instruction for students with significant reading problems, 3) descriptive studies of effective instructional environments for English language learners, and 4) the research base on components of an effective beginning reading program” (Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004, p. 199). The following subscale clusters were the outcome of this work:

1. Explicit Teaching/Art of Teaching
2. Instruction Geared Toward Low-Performers
3. Sheltered English Techniques
4. Interactive Teaching
5. Vocabulary Development
6. Phonemic Awareness and Decoding

Findings from research support a growing body of research and knowledge that “English learners who are learning to read in English may acquire reading skills in much the same developmental pattern and timeline as native English speakers” (Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004, p. 204). The outcome of this work was framed into subscale clusters. Cluster 1 was labeled as explicit teaching, which was supported by various researchers (Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Ryder, Burton, & Siberg, 2006) as an effective practice for all learners. Explicit instruction integrated smaller learning units allowing instruction to be tailored to specific

learning and attention needs. As Gersten et al. (2004) reported elementary students are cognitively engaged throughout the learning when they have opportunities to self-monitor and direct their own learning. Morrow et al. (2008) described engagement for first graders through the social interaction similar to Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2010) as strong expectations for work and achievement. Small group instruction, along with collaborative groups, increased student engagement as well as social interactions. Findings from Morrow et al. (2008) suggested that warm, caring, and consistent management supported instruction, regardless of the practice being observed.

In a review of research, Morrison, Robbins, and Rose (2008) reported five overlapping categories K-12 culturally responsive teachers maintained while implementing their teaching, including high behavioral expectations similar to Gersten et al. (2004) and Morrow et al. (2008) while utilizing the practices of modeling and scaffolding. Morrison et al. (2008) confirmed that the use of teacher modeling following guided practice as well as scaffolding instruction to support and move toward independent practice were supportive of diverse learners.

During a three-year longitudinal study in first through third grade classrooms by Ryder, Burton, and Siberg (2006), research on direct instruction, similar to explicit instruction, compared effectiveness to a more traditional instruction. Ladson-Billings (1994) focused research to address cultural deficits as did Ryder et al. (2006); they as well as other researchers found that positive reinforcement and high expectations increased motivation through rapid pacing with short breaks, modeling, and small group instruction. The components of instruction observed during the study were: small-group

instruction, oral responding in unison, rapid pacing with short breaks, careful attention to students' oral response, correction through praise and modeling, and motivation through extrinsic reward. Findings supported what many researchers (Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Ryder, Burton, & Siberg, 2006) have also observed: that modeling, small group, and oral responses are instructional practices that engage diverse students in the classroom. Making use of small groups as an instructional practice with learners from diverse backgrounds suggests the potential benefit to having conversations that promote growth and support learning. With diverse populations, researchers noted effective instructional practices employ reinforcement, modification, high expectations, and a nurturing environment.

Research by Kurawa (2010) examined how diverse children in grades K-3 can be included in the same classroom and share the same learning agenda, especially cooperative learning strategies, such as small group learning similar to Taylor et al. (2000). Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (2000) reported a collaborative model in the elementary classroom between classroom teacher, a resource teacher, and an ESL and/or special education teacher working together in a single classroom supported all learners.

Even in classrooms where multiple teachers work together to support all learners, learners' feelings can be difficult to express. Presumably, self-efficacy helps shape qualities and/or self-views in growing children that have important adaptive value as well as create the feeling of belonging. According to Bandura (1981), self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations. In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or

her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura (1981) described these beliefs as factors of how people think, behave, and feel. Morrison et al. (2008), aligning their research with Ladson-Billings' framework, determined that creating and nurturing cooperative environments and using students' strengths as instructional starting points increased a sense of belonging, which increased self-efficacy. From a teaching standpoint, the goal of culturally responsive teaching is to "heighten [each] students' academic performance by providing materials to encourage students' use of what they know to acquire new knowledge, skills, and dispositions" (Hefflin, 2002, p. 233). Within the classroom, a climate should be inclusive to value all and should encompass competence, accomplishment, confidence, and efficacy within the environment. Environment in this context includes social, emotional, and physical aspects of the classroom that influence student growth and behavior.

Much of the research I reviewed provided descriptions on teachers' roles and experiences. Of the few studies examining students' perspectives, the focus was on students in middle school and high school and generally urban schools (e.g., Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2004). The role of teachers in education has been identified as a significant factor that affects student learning; however, more research on the relationship between the teacher and the student, from the student perspective, should be conducted. Connolly (2000) maintained through listening and hearing what children say, and paying attention to the ways in which they communicate, progress would be made towards conducting research with, rather than simply on, children.

## **Student Voice**

Researchers have found to listen attentively to the voice of students' perceptions and their contributions, specifically through storytelling, supports understanding of student-teacher relationships. Howard (2001) provided a summary of his research focused on elementary African-American students' perspectives of their learning environments. He asserted, "The scant attention paid to students' voice is inexcusable given their role as the primary clientele in K-12 schools" (p. 132). Howard's work with elementary students emphasized the absence of students' voices and how their perspectives have been overlooked. Throughout his study, data on students' perceptions of teaching methods used by four different elementary teachers independently identified as being culturally responsive was systematically collected and analyzed through observation and interviews (Howard, 2001). Howard stated student's comments "appear to reflect a teacher practice that is essential to culturally responsive teaching, which is creating a learning environment that helps students to reach their highest levels of academic achievement" (p. 139). Another frequent theme extracted from the research was "family type atmosphere" as classrooms collaborate and help students come together as a community (Howard, 2001, p. 141). Similar to Howard, Nieto (1994) elaborated an essential element of culturally relevant pedagogy was listening attentively to the voice of students. Nieto engaged in a systematic interview research project with young people in high school from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social-class backgrounds to gather what their opinions were on school policies and practices. Additionally,

participants reflected on the effects of racism and other forms of discrimination on their education, perceptions of the curriculum, tracking and grades, and their attitudes about biases. Nieto (1994) determined students found curriculum irrelevant and English was overemphasized in classrooms. Students felt strongly that teachers should know about the overall culture of students. Cook-Sather (2002) stated that students maintained a perspective of what was happening in the classroom, and, yet, when several studies were reviewed rarely were their voices expressed through research. Student voices are lent to research when children have the opportunity to make sense of social identities and inquire how students of diverse groups were influenced by what happens in the classroom (Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). As Milner (2008) stated, a culturally responsive teacher understands student-teacher relationship is critical to being a successful educator. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) stated, “We need to listen closely to teachers and other learners and to the stories of their lives in and out of classrooms. We also need to tell our own stories as we live our own collaborative researcher/teacher lives” (p. 12). Au and Mason (1981) stated student perspective allows overlapping speech and co-narration in a collaborative production of answers by several students. When a teacher asked leading questions but allowed students to collaborate and respond rather than controlling who would respond, student voice was heard and student engagement increased. Based on student voices and research findings, it was noted that building a learning community, developing culturally diverse understandings, and using culturally relevant curricula all resonate with key elements identified by Gay (2010). Furthermore, Villegas and Lucas (2007) highlighted particular themes, especially holding affirming beliefs about diversity

as well as a commitment to learning about students' lives, that advocated for calling upon student perspective.

Within the research I reviewed, the findings provided general threads (see Table 2) and guidelines for improving instructional practices, primarily in the elementary grades, while increasing students' feelings of inclusion. However, there was a paucity of research on whether specific instructional practices increased students' feelings of inclusion in the classrooms, specifically within first through third grades.

Table 2  
*Primary Topics, Definitions, and Supporting Research From Review of Literature*

Primary Topics	Definition Used in This Study	Supporting Research
Culturally Responsive Teaching	Gay's use of the concept and terminology of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is to connect students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that develop a caring learning community within the classroom.	Au, 1998, 2001, 2006; Gay, 2000, 2010; Hollie 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 1994, 1996, 2013; Paris, 2012; Vasquez, 2010; and Villegas & Lucas, 2007.
Social Identity	The fact of being whom or what a person is; perception of self and others. How children see themselves as a member of a group.	Hefflin, 2002; McCarthey, 2001; Souto-Manning, 2013; Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Jones-Walker, 2015; Young, 2010.
Multimodal Instruction	Instructional practices/ specific teaching methods that guide interaction and a sense of belonging in the classroom. Multimodal instruction uses social and cultural resources to include but not limit to discourse, drama, drawing, and digital and technology resources. Specifically including language and	Baker, Gersten, Haager, & Dingle, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Gersten, Baker, Haager, & Graves, 2004; Howard, 2001; Hyland, 2015; Kress, 2009; Kurawa, 2010; McCombs, Daniels, & Perry, 2008; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008; Ryder,



	literacy development instructional practices through processes of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visual representation.	Burton, & Silberg, 2006; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000.
Student Voice	To listen attentively to the voice of students' perceptions and their contributions, specifically through storytelling.	Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Cook-Sather, 2002; Hyland, 2015; Howard, 2001; Milner, 2008; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007

### **Philosophical Conversation**

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology. The research process is intertwined with epistemological (investigating nature, methods, and limits of knowledge) and ontological (nature of existence or being) beliefs. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) dual conceptions of 'lived' and 'objective' space, the mediating role of acquiring a sense of identity, and the role of social construction of lived space may be the focus. As I conducted research on lived classroom experiences of expressions of social identity through the voice of young children and their teachers' instructional practices, I followed post-intentional phenomenology first and foremost, while embracing some of Merleau-Ponty's work in regards to perception, as well as data collection practices of narrative inquiry. As Vagle (2014) suggested, it is significant to note in post-intentional phenomenology, "We treat all knowledge and all philosophical ideas as partial, fleeting, malleable, and ever-changing" (p. 124). Therefore, tentative manifestations took shape throughout this data collection and may not emerge in a similar manner again should this study be replicated in another context.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the aim of phenomenology is to describe the phenomenon, as "a manner or style of thinking" (as cited in Matthews, 2010, p. 13) and

in his book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, identified perception as a fundamentally, practical involvement with things. As Matthews (2010) shared, Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception is "To perceive something is not just to have an idea of it, but to deal with it in some way" (p. 6). Therefore, I moved from having an idea of how teachers support social identity in the classroom, and embraced thinking about perceptions of social identity through student voice. Being observant of and teaching through culturally responsive instructional practices while listening to student narratives of experiences allowed exploration of perceptions of social identity. Introducing literature and writing tasks to support an understanding and development of social identity was part of the exploration of student perceptions and what knowledge they maintain about social identities.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested reduction as a process that involves bracketing, described by Clark and Creswell (2010) as having the researchers reflect on their own prior knowledge about the phenomenon and set aside that knowledge to keep focus on the participants. The process of phenomenological reduction is based on a practice of *bracketing*. However, Swedish phenomenologist Karin Dahlberg (2006) created a process she referred to as *bridling*, which Vagle (2014) has now evolved into a new term and practice he calls *post-reflexivity*. This simply refers to adherences to the doubt and questioning of what is understood through the natural attitude. Vagle (2014) asserted post-reflexivity requires researchers to "document, wonder about and question connections/discussions, assumptions of what we take to be normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked" (p. 132). I questioned my initial understandings of what I

believed identity to mean, while I developed considerations of identity-building practices through this post-intentional work. As I began to wonder, question, and think about the phenomenon identity, I documented my initial statements through a post-reflexion statement maintained in my journal to focus on beliefs and perspectives as well as assumptions I maintained. As Vagle (2014) promoted, this statement was important when crafting very early in the research, as well as throughout the research process, as it is a critical element of post-intentional phenomenology. I also documented my initial statements on multimodal instruction, how that could look in a classroom and how the practices have been deemed culturally responsive. Initial statements on teacher collaboration and the impact team planning can have when implementing identity-building practices in the classroom were included, as I became a co-teacher in the classroom, not just an observer. As I wrote in my post-reflexion journal, I negotiated my role in the classroom:

*As I wonder what it is like for third grade students to express and have their social identities take shape, specifically in the classroom, I am questioning how to best listen to the voices from students' perspectives. I do not want to try and define social identities, I want to hear and see what students share as expressions of social identities. Being an observer is an option, however, I am not confident that students will actually be as open to talk with me if I don't really foster a relationship with them in the classroom. Co-planning was decided on as a method of collaboration in the early stages of this partnership. Mrs. Pappas and I both think I should co-teach and lead a small book group to build a strong relationship*

*and really be a part of the classroom community. I have missed teaching in the elementary classroom so much I am really looking forward to this experience. I believe that being an active member of the classroom will build trust and allow me to create intentional relationships with the classroom teacher and her students. I believe this active role of co-teaching will also help me in my role, as assistant faculty member teaching teacher candidates too, by being practicing teaching strategies are currently considered culturally responsive. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

Essences, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), are tools used in the attempt to understand our own lives in the world or in an experience. Rather than trying to discover essences, post-intentional phenomenology adopts a view of intentionality, which is the intentional relationship a person has with the phenomenon, and therefore essences are referred to as “tentative manifestations.” As Vagle (2014) suggested, tentative manifestations are believed to be flexible, contextual, fluid, and ever changing. Tentative manifestations move social identities into understanding through contexts, situations and the partial, and the overlaps, rather than where they may be centered.

This study was grounded in experiencing research through a post-intentional phenomenology lens, operating some aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s perception and how humans relate to and interact with the world. Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) dual conceptions of ‘lived’ and ‘objective’ space, the mediating role of acquiring identity, and the role of social construction of lived space maintain a focus. As Clandinin (2006) suggested, narrative inquiry, as a method of data collection, was applied by writing lived experience

descriptions through narrative text and images, as well as through “engaging with participants through telling stories or through coming alongside participants in living out stories” (p. 47). Merleau-Ponty supported capturing the essence, as does narrative inquiry, whereas post-intentional phenomenology requires a more fluid concept of tentative manifestations discovered through the edges and folds of ever-evolving knowledge. Challenging the assumption of what doesn’t fit through being reflexive and really listening to the invisible is essential in post-intentional phenomenology. For example, Vagle (2014) stated to “constantly interrogate pre-understandings and develop understandings of the phenomenon” (p. 132).

In my study, I will be merging two methodologies: Post-intentional phenomenology, which is an investigation of phenomenon, and narrative inquiry as a data collection tool to look at stories of self; while utilizing student voice as a way to look at meaningful presence with a power to influence understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice. I wanted to translate the meaning of commitments and reposition students in educational research through merging these methodologies. As a researcher, I made a claim to consider utilizing student voice through storytelling, as a form of opening communication between students and their teachers, to provide evidence of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice. Throughout data collection, I explored efforts to identify student voice as a means of challenging traditional and conventional roles in education.

Phillion (2010) stated, “Narrative inquiries almost always are about people’s lives, their interests, concerns, and passions” (p. 17). Narrative inquiry served as a

window into the complexities of planning, experiences, and lives within a classroom. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) shared that teachers' stories are integral in the classroom, which made me wonder about student stories in the classroom. How do experiences provide a lens into the role culture plays in their teaching and learning? Clandinin and Connelly (1995) shared thoughts on the importance of stories in relation to experiences by stating,

In this view of teachers' knowledge, teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relived the changed stories. In this narrative view of teachers' knowledge, we mean more than teachers' telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (p. 12)

The purpose of a post-intentional phenomenological approach is to explore the phenomenon and how it is lived out. Vagle (2014) stated, "Post-intentional phenomenology can join the conversation about multiplicity, difference, and partiality" (p. 114). Drawing on narrative inquiry to inform data collection, my intent was to design a study using post-intentional phenomenology methodology while including components of narrative inquiry and student voice. I had a textual conversation with phenomenology and theoretical conceptions of cultural responsive teaching to address students' perception of social identities through post-intentional methodology.

Using student voice to discuss how students are situated in education supported the framework of culturally responsive teaching, such as demonstrating caring and

building learning communities. As Cook-Sather (2015) proposed, “Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling, that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults, and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education” (p. 383). Attention to student voice allows teachers to address student perspective, while also validating their classroom identity and supporting their work as producers of knowledge. Student voice can support understanding of instructional practices, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and cultural identity. Cook-Sather (2009) maintained, “Remembering students’ experience, really listening to them, and taking their perspectives seriously all allow teachers to create classrooms in which students are active partners not only in dialogue, but also in learning” (p. 179). Student voice as a tool for improving classroom environments through involvement and belonging directly affects opportunities to feel included and respected (Cook-Sather, 2015). While student voice can take shape through many forms (e.g., self-expression, feedback, opinion, and choice), I explored giving young children the opportunity to dialogue about their perspectives and social identities in relation to instructional practices researchers and teachers maintain as culturally relevant. Drawing on Cook-Sather’s work on student voice developed critical awareness and commitment to action for students to be partners in fostering relationship development between student and teacher.

### **Statement of Phenomenon (Research Questions)**

My work involved observing and documenting teacher-to-student as well as student-to-student relationships while utilizing instructional practices in the classroom to

affirm and support students' social identities and backgrounds. My research questions focused on students' experiences with multimodal instructional practices used to help develop an understanding of social identities and centered on the lived experience of culturally responsive teaching as a third grade student in a diverse classroom.

I situated my study within the research on culturally responsive teaching, focusing on the ideas and strategies identified in the process of teachers trying to "become culturally responsive." Although originally theorized for racially marginalized populations, and most often highlighted in middle and high school settings, I believe rural elementary education could benefit greatly from the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. As Nieto (2012) suggested, culturally responsive teaching recognizes, respects, and uses students' identities and backgrounds as meaningful sources for creating inclusive learning environments. My purpose within the current study was to undertake a narrative exploration of one third-grade classroom while co-planning and co-teaching using instructional strategies that are considered culturally responsive, and to support social identities within the classroom. My study focused on culturally responsive teaching supported through student perspectives, which has not been the subject of sufficient attention in the research and yet is becoming a widespread practice. Specifically, the narrative was from student voices with my inquiry seeking to answer the following primary phenomenological question:

How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom?



Secondary questions to help further the focus of the work and seek to inform future iterations of the design included:

- a. How do third graders' narratives express equity through multimodal learning in classrooms?
- b. What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices?

As Vagle (2014) contended, “Intentionality has been used to describe the way in which humans are connected meaningfully with the world” (p. 112). Phenomenologists therefore are studying how meanings “come-to-be” (p. 112). Vagle (2014) agreed with Merleau-Ponty that “threads of intentionality connect all meaning that runs through relations” (p. 113). Post-intentional phenomenology supports a focus on the folds, or gray areas, that may signify intentional meanings of the phenomenon of expressions of social identities. This suggests the researcher is not trying to center meaning but allows overlap and makes boundaries flexible. Vagle (2014) explained “intentionality to mean the inseparable connectedness between subjects (that is, human beings) and objects (that is, all other things, animate and inanimate, and ideas) in the world” (p. 27). Therefore, intentionality in my study was about experiencing the connectedness among students, teacher, and researcher; and experiences of social identities. However, it is worth mentioning this methodology may not afford finding an answer of what social identity is, as phenomenologists conceive knowledge as not obsolete; knowledge is endlessly deferred.

## Contexts

Spaces and places to discover students' perceptions of identity through student voice were situated in a diverse (across race, ethnicity, gender, native languages, social class, religion, sexual orientation, as well as ability) elementary classroom in west central Wisconsin. Several spaces afforded learning environments that affirmed students' identities and backgrounds, such as other classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria, playground, the school bus, and home. This study focused on the places of the classroom and hallways. Spaces that afforded teacher to researcher interaction were also included, such as classrooms, teacher lounge, and other meeting areas.

Kenwood Elementary School serves approximately 390 kindergarten through fifth grade students. This school is situated in the middle of a rural, working class neighborhood in the center of the district. The students at Kenwood Elementary School reflect the diversity of the district, with the exception of having a low Hmong population at this particular school. Kenwood had an overall accountability score with a "meets expectations" rating in 2013-2014, the most current school and district report card available through the state department of instruction. Table 3 indicates the various categories and percentages, as well as the documented score.

Table 3  
*School Report Card Data*

	Grade Level(s)	School Type	School Enrollment	District Enrollment
Kenwood Elementary	PreKindergarten-5	Elementary	391	3,312
Ethnic/Racial Percentages				

American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.30%	Asian or Pacific Islander 4.90%	Black not Hispanic 1.00%	Hispanic 3.30%	White not Hispanic 90.50%
Other Diversity-Related Percentages				
Students with Disabilities 14.10%	Economically Disadvantaged 36.60%	Limited English Proficient 3.60%	Attendance Rate Score 76.5	Absenteeism Rate Deduction Goal met: no deduction
Achievement Data for Reading and Math				
School Student Achievement Score 28.2	School Reading Achievement Score 32.8	School Mathematics Achievement Score 32.8	School Third-Grade Reading Achievement Score 10.2	School Third-Grade Reaching Achievement Max Score 20

Third grade teachers at Kenwood Elementary often work together as a team to plan and engage in professional development opportunities when available. The self-contained classrooms usually have at least 20 students, with special education teachers coming into the classroom to assist students. However, sometimes students were removed from the classroom for services outside of the classroom. Since I had previously supervised teacher candidates in these third grade classrooms, I had collaborated with all three teachers and knew our work together would not be about finding definite answers; it would be about engaging in dialogue, posing new questions, and supporting each other. I worked with one teacher and classroom to dive deeper into the phenomenon and to focus on relationships with fewer students. For this study, I came into the classroom two to three times a week during the afternoon for nearly four months to work with Mrs. Pappas

and her 19 students, usually during time scheduled for read to self or social studies. Mrs. Pappas is a veteran teacher and had been teaching third grade for over 20 years. She is a White female and lives with her family in the community where she teaches. Mrs. Pappas wanted our time in the classroom to focus on big ideas that seemed easy to list but were powerful in context; we quickly agreed upon the big ideas of courage, culture, exploration, identity, emotion, and languages. Additionally, since the state of Wisconsin is recommending that teachers consider how they support all learners in diverse classrooms, culturally responsive teaching became a focus, as well. Each year, teachers in the district have shared that they struggled to define and understand what culturally responsive practices mean and look like in their classrooms. Administration within the district stated teachers have professional development on culturally responsive teaching practices; however, most teachers with whom I have spoken do not agree with that summation and struggled to recall professional development opportunities.

To establish an enduring understanding and essential question was more difficult, but we knew it was critical to do so before we began. Throughout the various units implemented, students had the opportunity to explain who they were and how they interacted with others in positive and even negative ways. The enduring understanding became “culture and environment shape our social identities.” The essential question students would answer was “Who am I, and how do I relate to others, and how do we begin to understand another culture?” Mrs. Pappas and I met weekly to co-plan with the enduring understanding and essential question as focal points. Mrs. Pappas shared the expectations of third grade standards and what she was required to teach. We used

Google drive to store all of our brainstorming, plans, and materials to share with the other third grade teachers and to have ongoing access.

During my time in the classroom, I was able to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom daily activities and routines at various points in the day. Mainly I was in the classroom in the afternoons during read to self and social studies scheduled times. Mrs. Pappas opened her classroom up for us to negotiate space to engage in culturally responsive teaching. When designing the units of study, Mrs. Pappas and I included voices of the students in the classroom, their families, and the surrounding community. Together as a researcher and classroom teacher, we employed the required and traditional curriculum inequities within the classroom while welcoming an exploration with culturally responsive teaching. The focus was to help all students acquire knowledge, attitudes, and experiences with cross-cultural interactions through classroom activities and multicultural literature. My post-reflexion journal captured a sense of the school and classroom context:

*When I walk into the school, I usually wonder if either of the staff at the front desk will acknowledge my presence when I am checking in. I usually see a few students and staff walking in the hallway as I walk to the third grade wing. Each time I step into the classroom, there is a sense of excitement and children greet me. The noise level varies depending on the activity. I also feel welcome and valued as a member of this classroom. Mrs. Pappas has explained to the class that I am another teacher who is there to help them learn and grow. She shared with students that we were going to try some different teaching activities to see how*

*students felt about learning, about school, and their classmates. Mrs. Pappas even shared that our goal is to help other teachers learn strategies to help all students feel successful. When I get to the classroom, it is almost as if the students have forgotten I am doing a study in the classroom. Students are excited to see me and hear what we are going to do today. I enjoy being in this classroom and working with the students. Transitions flow and students know the expectations in the classroom, and yet they can be quite chatty and need reminders to stay on task. Often, Mrs. Pappas or I will begin our activity with a reminder of our expectations and what the time together will look like, sound like, and accomplish. It is clear to me Mrs. Pappas has spent a great deal of time teaching students about her expectations and consequences. (Researcher Post-Reflection Journal)*

### **Participant Selection**

I considered a number of potential contexts in this research. These included how to best negotiate access to the classroom and participants as well as how to limit possible disruption to the individual participants, particularly the students. The name of the school district, school, and individuals were identified with pseudonyms and all data were kept anonymous. All participants were given verbal and written information about the research in advance of the data collection (see appendix A). I collected signed consent forms before observations and co-teaching were conducted. All participants were advised of their rights to withdraw or refuse to participate in the research at any stage. I obtained parental consent from all students in the class (see appendix B). I was able to co-teach

and co-plan with one White female elementary school teacher who is part of a third grade team. The partnership allowed me to become a member of her classroom and participate as an active researcher through planning sessions, co-teaching when applicable, observing students, and analyzing the day-to-day environment of the classroom. I intended to explore what this classroom teacher considered to be culturally responsive teaching and what instructional practices she used to support pedagogy, especially in relation to supporting students' identity development. For this work, I wondered what it was like for third grade students to express their social identities and how they would take shape, specifically in the classroom. I was interested in students' perceptions and how the teacher's instructional practices made an impact on their identity development. The classroom had 19 students and I selected, with the teacher's input, five focal students for data analysis. As Katz (1982) suggested, at this age psychological traits such as motivation, efficacy, and belonging are included in their explanations of why people are in different circumstances. Third grade tends to be a year in which students can articulate clearly in their speech and writing, as well as form opinions about various topics to share based on life experiences.

Using a post-intentional phenomenology methodology, I was able to support the notion that revealing young children's perspectives related to their lived experiences of the community in the classroom can impact their expressions of social identities. I was challenged to think about my own beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of social identities while planning my study. I found it helpful to view the phenomenon of expressions of social identity through an exploration of entering three research traditions:

post-intentional phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and student voice. Focusing on the intersection of these three traditions helped strengthen my understanding of each of these research perspectives and what they can offer together that none can offer on their own.

Blending these research traditions together, I would be able to include children as part of the research.

Table 4  
*Research Focal Participant Profiles*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Background information shared by student</b>
Olivia	9	Female	Two homes, Mom and Dad are divorced. Younger brother who is in 1 <sup>st</sup> grade. Lives at both houses and switches weekly. Loves to write, draw, and be creative. Emails Mom when she is at Dad's house. Appears to be shy by giggling when she talks, but has very thoughtful and important things to share.
Mitchell	8	Male	Mom, Dad, brother and sister live at home together. Very active in theater, but doesn't talk much about it. Both parents work in education. Likes to play video games, wears a watch to monitor physical activity to be able to play video games at home. Tends to speak dramatically and sometimes sing responses.
Izzy	9	Female	Mom and Dad and younger sister who is 4 years old live together in a nice house. Loves to read and go to school. Feels pressure to do her best work and go above and beyond expectations. Strong reader and is good at math. Wants everyone to feel included and like her.
Maya	8	Female	Lives mainly with Mom and Stepdad with older sister who is in middle school. Mom is Norwegian, Dad is from Mexico, and Stepdad is from El Salvador. A stepbrother from El Salvador is trying to move to live with them. Only goes to Dad's every other weekend.
Michael	9	Male	Two homes, Mom and Dad are divorced and have a Stepmom and Stepdad that he doesn't talk much



			about. He has a sister and a half-sister. Loves to play video games, legos, and be at the farm. Needs accommodations for school work and is on a performance/behavior plan that is monitored daily, but not with special education services outside of the classroom.
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I entered each of the methodology traditions: post-intentional phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and student voice, to make a claim that utilizing students as a form of opening communication between students and their teachers provides evidence of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice. In Chapter 3, I explore post-intentional phenomenology's research component #2: Devise a Clear, Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Data Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation to study the classroom practices from the point of view of students and how those practices influence students from diverse backgrounds. Also included in Chapter 3 is Research Component #3: Make a *Post-Reflexion* Plan, which shares how I questioned my understanding of identity, specifically in the context of classrooms. Furthermore, in the next chapter I describe the research design, methods of data collection and analysis process that led to findings identified as tentative manifestations, and my researcher positionality.

### Chapter 3: Gathering Data

*“I don’t always get included and I feel different sometimes.”*  
Mitchell, age 8

To investigate what would come to be tentative manifestations in my post-intentional phenomenological approach, I reviewed “the dynamic interrelationships that tie participants, the researcher, the produced text, and their positionalities together” (Vagle, 2014, p. 30). I also investigated expressions of social identities from student perspectives. Phenomenological studies frequently utilize unstructured, face-to-face interviews to document lived experiences and provide insight to a particular phenomenon (Vagle, 2014). Particularly important in phenomenology is the researcher “finding themselves in the experience” (Vagle, 2014, p. 21). Therefore, for my study I asked what it is like to experience social identities in the classroom, not what social identities are. In post-intentional phenomenology research, it is recommended to include data sources that intentionally represent the phenomenon in varied contexts. In other words, “studying one’s participants’ intentional relationship with the phenomenon under investigation” is the purpose of post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2014, p. 129). For my study, I set out to gather data on expressions of social identities from third graders through unstructured interviews during classroom discourse. Because I was working with young children, I wanted to include documented data sources from a narrative inquiry methodology perspective to allow for more of students’ own voices to emerge.

**Research Component #2: Devise a Clear, Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Data****Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation**

Throughout my study, I was co-teaching or leading whole and small group units of study that took place in social studies, English language arts, and math modules. Being present in the classroom and leading instructional opportunities provided a hands-on approach to being a researcher in the classroom. I was not there to just observe, but to be actively present and part of the classroom. This hands-on approach allowed me to hear and experience student voice first-hand while building a trusting relationship with all of the members of the classroom community. My goal was to deeply experience and provide narrative documentation of the lived classroom experiences while paying attention to the shifting perspectives in relation to social identities for third grade students. Throughout the various units of study implemented, students had the opportunity to share personal traits that made them individuals, and describe how they interacted with others in positive and negative ways. As the classroom teacher and I planned for the social studies unit taught, the goal for the enduring understanding that students would learn became “culture and environment shape our social identities.” The essential question for students to answer was “who am I, how do I relate to others, and how do we begin to understand another culture?” Mrs. Pappas and I wanted to weave the enduring understanding and essential question into the content area of social studies, but also integrate them in the small book groups.

I was incredibly fortunate to be welcomed into a third grade classroom for this research. Our partnership was a good fit as our philosophies of education are quite similar. Mrs. Pappas shared,

All students have the ability to be successful in school. I will do whatever I can to provide a variety of teaching strategies and approaches to reach students of all learning styles. I enjoy working collaboratively with others to create the best learning environment for my students. I believe that students will learn more effectively by using “hands-on” methods. I enjoy helping students become life-long learners and effective members of society. (Personal Interaction)

I was driven by an interest in the experiences of teachers and students in rural schools that strive to be culturally responsive classrooms, and that led me to conduct a post-intentional phenomenology investigation in one third grade classroom. I intended to learn from students’ lived classroom experiences, hearing student voice through their stories. In my role as a researcher, I was an active planning member as well as a co-teacher when possible within the classroom. I enjoyed these roles because of my former experience as a classroom teacher in the elementary grades. Through observations, artifacts, and classroom discourse, I was able to craft tentative manifestations based on the lived experiences of students within their classroom community in a rural classroom. I was attentive and listened, in particular, to five focal participants. My purpose was to notice expressions of social identities and listen intently to the narratives in students’ voices as they were shared through 12 weeks in a third grade classroom.

The first two weeks I was in the classroom, I was able to co-plan and co-teach during a social studies unit focused on historical timelines. The central goal was “perspective taking.” The classroom teacher, Mrs. Pappas, and I asked students to think about, “If You Were There When (during a different time, a different place)?” This unit was part of an arts integration grant between the school district, local university, and a local non-profit organization Center for the Arts. The planning and collaborative teaching took place between the three third grade teachers, the assigned teaching artist, and myself. Melanie, the assigned teaching artist, had worked professionally in theater and film to address social issues and foster dialogue around those issues. She was passionate about combining theater with history, science, and other subjects to provide engaging ways for students to access the past.

The two specific units of study I was a part of planning and co-teaching w related to the American Revolution and immigration. The units of study were very broad in content and in what students should know, understand, and be able to do. Consequently, one of the third grade teachers stated, “*Our topics are “huge” and we need to determine the importance for our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.*”

Mrs. Pappas and I also agreed to work on English language arts to improve the instructional experiences that supported students’ personal identity development while focusing on culturally responsive teaching practices. This occurred over 10 weeks. During designated “read to self” time, Mrs. Pappas and I conducted small literature groups. Together, we spent several weeks planning instructional activities that supported students’ interests and backgrounds. Mrs. Pappas indicated her current students needed to

work on the following skill areas for their reading level based on Fountas and Pinnell. Readers at level K/L were to focus on predicting outcomes and story structure, readers at level N/O needed to focus on drawing conclusions and understanding the author's point of view, and readers at level S/T needed to work on problem-solving and cause and effect. Through a family quilt project during social studies, we learned about students' ethnic backgrounds and family dynamics that students were experiencing (see appendix C). Together, Mrs. Pappas and I created an inventory (see appendix D) for students to complete as well as to systematically gather students' interests and concerns or excitements we could try to mirror within the literature. The inventory provided information on students' current reading habits, favorite genres, and their perceived needs as readers. The reading inventory also asked about students' likes and dislikes regarding reading, asked about some books they had previously read, and included questions on their feelings such as being sad or happy. After reviewing the inventory data, looking at resources available at the school, reviewing multicultural literature articles and websites, and also speaking with elementary school librarians, we decided on three chapter books. These books would assist with our goals in conducting book groups that focused on students' reading levels, languages spoken at home, and family dynamics students were experiencing. I was able to collaborate with Mrs. Pappas and implement what I had learned as a doctoral student in relation to identity, criteria for selection of diverse and multicultural literature, as well as teaching practices that support culturally responsive teaching. Mrs. Pappas and I spent time selecting books to ensure they connected personally to a few of the students in the various book groups. To engage in culturally

responsive teaching practices, the book groups were small in the number of participants, used literature aligned with cultural experiences with home and community connections, and provided cross-language connections. Six students, three boys and three girls, were identified as level K/L readers. This small group read the book *Song Lee and the "I Hate You" Note* by Suzy Kline (2001). Seven students were identified as level N/O readers. These four boys and three girls read the book *Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School, and Other Scary Things* by Lenore Look (2009). The small group with readers identified as S/T readers had four boys and two girls reading *How Tía Lola Came to Visit-Stay* by Julia Alvarez (2002).

Throughout my time in the classroom, I was an active participant during math, social studies, and English language arts time. With the three subject areas, I was able to be a part of and document students' lived classroom experiences during various times in the school day. I was positioned as a guest in their classroom. I was a researcher who had my own biases about how multicultural texts and materials are used in the classroom. I also carried a bias for selecting particular types of teaching practices. A summary of the content areas, units of study, time contexts, learning goals, and assessments are listed below in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Descriptions of Unit Plans*

Content Area/ Unit of Study	Time Contexts	Learning Goal(s)	Assessment(s)
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<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Immigration</p>	<p>1 week 3 days/week</p>	<p>a) Identify and examine various sources of information that are used for constructing an understanding of the past, such as artifacts, documents, letters, diaries, maps, photos, paintings, and oral presentations.</p> <p>b) Notice what you see in the picture. Ask and answer the Big 6 questions. Distinguish point of view of separate characters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical Writing</li> <li>• Suitcase Packing and Writing</li> <li>• Family Quilt Square</li> <li>• Picture Books</li> </ul>
<p>English/ Language Arts</p> <p>Small Book Groups</p> <p><i>(K/L) Song Lee and the "I Hate You" Note</i></p> <p><i>(N/O) Alvin Ho Allergic to Girls, School, and Other Scary Things</i></p> <p><i>(S/T) How Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay</i></p>	<p>10 weeks 2 days/week</p> <p>February 9- April 13, 2016</p> <p>* One week off for Spring Break and one week off due to schedule conflicts</p>	<p>a) Explore the role of character traits and point of view through literature while making connections of personal self to the characters.</p> <p>b) Examine stories and narratives to understand the lives of people and explain their relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading, Journals, and activities</li> <li>• Graphic Novel biography written story</li> </ul>
<p>English/ Language Arts</p> <p>Poetry Unit</p>	<p>1 week 2 days/week</p>	<p>Explore the role of character traits and point of view through dramatization while using correct volume when speaking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written poetry script</li> <li>• Partner Performance</li> </ul>



English/ Language Arts	2 weeks 2-3 days/week	Develop an understanding of writing effectively and with detail about personal history such as family, friends, interests, and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical Writing</li> <li>• Goal Setting</li> <li>• Who Am I book writing</li> </ul>
Biographical writing and goal setting			

### Selecting Data Sources

To listen attentively to the voices of students, including their perceptions and their ideas through language, storytelling, and other artistic expressions, I was actively engaged with third grade students as I participated in the classroom. My goal was to gain an understanding of students' expressions of social identities and how student narratives express equity within culturally responsive teaching and multimodal learning. I wondered if there was a relationship between student expressions of social identities and culturally responsive teaching. Being true to the tenants of the methodology of phenomenology, I paid attention to students' lived classroom experiences to find authentic data sources that allowed for student voice to be explored and heard. I conducted unstructured interviews throughout classroom instructional time during classroom events to maintain a post-intentional phenomenology research approach. The alternative narrative inquiry approaches I used included field notes, autobiographical and biographical writing, letter writing, and reviews of student artifacts. I selected to use narrative inquiry to support young children's multimodal language and literacy abilities. I used the students' narratives to determine the relationship between expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices. For example, text sets, guided

reading and discussion, collaborative and interactive writing, bilingual books (some text in students' home language), autobiographies, and storytelling with wordless pictures created connections between similarities and differences. With such a variety of data sources, I used a post-reflexion journal to document my ongoing process of inquiry and guided the critical examination of my beliefs, assumptions, biases, and interpretations (Vagle, 2014).

**Post-intentional phenomenology data sources.** I gathered data through students' lived experiences in a third grade classroom on a weekly basis for 12 weeks; two to three days per week for roughly 45 minutes to an hour each visit. Nineteen third graders were all active participants during the classroom visits; however, data analysis focused on five focal participants. Further details are provided in Chapter 5, working through Research Component 5, to share how the data was interpreted and analyzed with the tentative manifestations to craft a text. For that text to be created, data collection was essential for exploring expressions of social identities from a third grade perspective in the multiple, partial, and varied contexts identified and documented to prepare for analysis. Each data source was intentionally decided on, planned for, and implemented in the third grade classroom to gather information "to study how things are being and becoming" relative to the phenomenon expressions of social identities with a focus on culturally responsive teaching in relation to this particular student group (Vagle, 2014, p.22). For example, my post-reflexion journal demonstrated how gender was a becoming an important topic:

*Today on my drive home, I kept thinking about Mitchell and how he shared what he would change his name to. It really didn't surprise me to hear him say,*

*“Megan,” a girl’s name, but what did surprise me was the lack of reaction from the small group. This interaction has me wondering about gender and how students think about it. What did this mean for Mitchell? What does it mean for other students to not react? Go back and think more about this. At what age or stage are children less comfortable with gender at play in the classroom? Mitchell backed off from the name Megan quickly, even though he did not get a negative response from his peers. I think I could spend more time with this. I need to spend more time with this in the future. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

***Lived-experience descriptions.*** Researching lived experiences is a qualitative approach to research that moves beyond relying on generalizations and theories. Lived experience descriptions offer insight on individuals within the context of their reality. The work of post-intentional phenomenology is about exploring the lived experiences intentionally and being engaged with a phenomenon and identifying tentative manifestations as discovered through the experiences. As van Manen (2001) noted:

In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience. The point of phenomenological research is to “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. (p. 62)

Many descriptions of the lived classroom experiences were documented through pictures, student voice transcription, individual reading journals, and student-created

artifacts. For example, Michaels' vignette shared in Chapter 1 was a lived experience description documented through pictures and student voice transcription. Figure 1 showcases student-created artifacts of American Revolution posterboards accompanied by the word bubbles. Figure 2 is a photograph capturing Michael's lived experience working to complete his poster board.



*Figure 1.* Student Completed American Revolution Posterboard and Word Bubbles



*Figure 2.* Michael Working at the Back Table on the American Revolution Posterboard

My post-reflexion journal shares documentation of lived classroom experiences that took place during my study. Each day, whether I visited the classroom or not, I

recorded thoughts and wonderings in my journal. Table 6 is an excerpt from Michael's lived experience referred to in the vignette and Figures 1 and 2.

Table 6  
*Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal Entry*

Date: Week 1, Day 2
<p>When I asked Michael what he had for information on this note-taking sheet, he responded, <i>"I don't know what it says; those are not my words. I don't know what it all says. I didn't write it."</i> I asked Michael if we could start over; if I could read him the information, and perhaps he could retell the information in his own words and I could write it down. Then he could write what I wrote on a new note-taking sheet that I would provide for him. <i>"Yes, that works better and I will have the same sheet. I will be smart and the same."</i> Michael worked next to me at the back table until his poster and speech bubble was completed. Often, he worked independently, but also sitting right next to me.</p>

This is a good example of how I documented a lived experience and could come back to wonder more about what it reveals. When reading through these data, I found myself asking questions about why Michael wanted to sit right next to me so often and focused on his comment of, "I will be smart and the same." My post-reflexion journal was more for the purpose of data analysis, not just data collection. The more time I spent reading my journal, the more questions and wonderings I found myself experiencing.

This above description of a lived experience is an example of how I “borrowed” from Michael’s experience in order to understand the deeper significance of what it means to need additional support in this third grade classroom, and how that is apart of a student’s social identity. The purpose of taking pictures, transcribing Michael’s voice, and adding my recollection during the experience is to offer insight of what it means to need support and how it can feel to a student, while also providing context for the experience.

*Researcher’s post-reflexivity journal.* To continually question and consider assumptions, values, and beliefs, a post-reflexive journal was maintained to document the experiences throughout the study. This journal was a private space, sometimes written and sometimes audio recorded, for me to reflect the journey in a narrative format and interrogate what framed my perception of the phenomena. When journaling electronically, I used two sources: evernote and the rev recorder app. Evernote is a digital workspace that allowed me to collect ideas, thoughts, words, pictures, and audio voice recordings. Through this app, I was able to use my iPhone, iPad, and computer to have all entries sync among the devices. Oftentimes, I used the app rev recorder to audio record experiences and discussions in the classroom, but also for reflection after leaving the classroom. This app provided transcription services to incorporate into my journaling. Generally, I would write by hand in a journal before going to the classroom and in between classroom visits. There was a true authentic feeling I had when I would actually sit down with paper and pen to express my wonderings that created an autobiographical account of experiences in the classroom. Most often, I hand wrote planning ideas and

follow-up discussion questions for participants. I would follow up with my writing after classroom visits (see Table 7) as a space to “wonder, question, think, contradict myself, agree with myself, laugh, and celebrate” (Vagle, 2014, p. 133).

Table 7  
*Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal Entry*

Before classroom visits post-reflexive statement
<p><i>I believe every single classroom, wherever it is located, is a diverse classroom, more specifically when you expand the definition beyond the typical race, class, gender, and academic performance constructs. I believe before you can fully understand the cultural experiences of others, it is important to understand yourself. I asked myself about my power and privileges allowing me to be where I am today. I also need to journal about what privileges and experiences have shaped who I am, what I think, and how I teach. This reminds me of the autobiography assignment I require my students to complete. I need to do the same reflection and writing to dig into my story. One's story illuminates the way you organize and understand your experiences. I am an educator who believes that students are motivated and successful when their teacher shows interest in who they are as individuals, knows parts of their individual stories, and creates a classroom around experiences, interests, and abilities. It is my assumption that when teachers take a stance for creating equitable opportunities in the classroom, culturally responsive teaching is taken up.</i></p>

**Narrative Inquiry Data Sources.** Clandinin (2013) stated, “Stories or narratives are also used as data in other qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology and case study” (p.12). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) determined the use of narrative inquiry inspired by a view of human experience, stating,

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 479)

Certainly the commitment to storytelling as an element of the work exists in post-intentional phenomenology and narrative inquiry. The differences of the two methodologies emerge when considering how these practices are enacted and how the underlying thinking of the practices is revealed.

**Field Notes.** Similar to a post-reflexivity journal, field records were collected through observations and those notes were used to explore ideas of what was being observed during classroom visits. Connelly and Clandinin (2011) noted, the “researcher’s notes are an active recording of construction of classroom events to record events without including analysis” (p. 5). My field notes were kept in my post-reflexive journal, and my



notes were recorded without an analysis or explanation. In my study, field notes had the purpose to expand understanding of an experience. I took notice of the openness to make decisions and be flexible to the phenomenon and how it was presenting in the classroom experiences. Notice how the field note shared in Table 8 is a recording of the classroom event when book groups were assigned to students.

Table 8  
*Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal Entry*

Reflections from Day 2 of Small Book Groups
<i>The one thing I noticed right away was that there was no issue, concern, frustration, or negative feelings about the book groups. Everyone just went right into getting their name called off, getting into their group without any concern and were just actually really excited to be in small groups and reading a new book. They never asked to be with a friend, they did not grumble about who was or was not in their group. And really, they never asked the title of the book. That seemed the least important aspect to all of the students.</i>

***Autobiographical and Biographical Writing.*** Through stories students shared, autobiographical and biographical writing became a data source. Participants' work samples and transcriptions of discussion were sources that supported narrative inquiry. Extended discourse during social studies and language arts time in the classroom supported this data source, as well.

Students were asked to create a 9-square quilt block (see Figure 3) sharing information about themselves and their family. To complete the blocks, families and students visually represented their family identity. The purpose was to learn about families and gain an understanding of similarities and differences. This quilt block became a story students shared to build an understanding of biographies through visual representation and text.



Figure 3. Nine-Square Family Quilt

**Letter Writing.** After completion of a small book group study, letters were written to engage in text dialogue between researcher and student participants. Clandinin (1986) suggested letter writing as a way of presenting and responding to interpretations through an exchange. The letters shared written dialogue of participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings about reading small groups. Students also wrote letters that described who they were and goals they had for the remainder of the school year. The purpose of various writing activities was to teach about letter writing format and requirements, but also to

allow for discourse that was not face-to-face. The letter in Figure 4 below shares Maya writing specifically about her likes regarding book groups and the activities completed during classroom instruction time. Notably, Maya referred to activities she really enjoyed yet I was not aware of. For example, she wrote, “I really liked filling out the packet,” which was referring to the reading journal. This was the first time Maya referred to that activity.

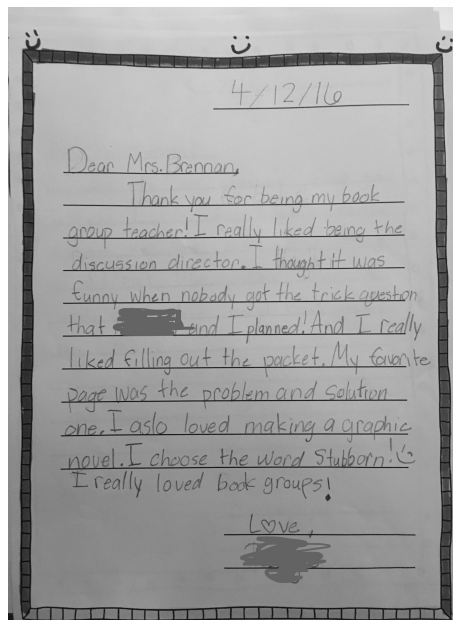
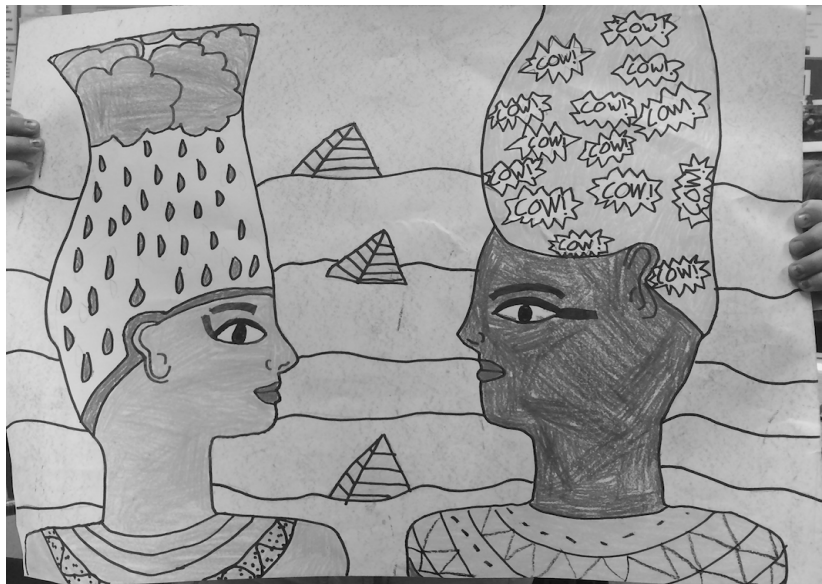


Figure 4. Maya's Letter

**Student Artifacts.** Authentic artifacts in the classroom were used to provide evidence for participant thoughts about social identities. Artifacts shared understandings, questions, and wonderings necessary to narratives in the classroom. Student-created work afforded written testimony for data collection. Artwork, writing, digital literacies, and reflections are included in my data.

Figure 5 was an art project Olivia created. This visual artifact sparked a discussion as she showed me her masterpiece and promptly asked the question, “Which one is the girl and which one is the boy?” Notice how participant work that was not content-specific created discourse that engaged ideas and thoughts about social identities. Examples such as this provided authentic evidence of understandings, questions, and wonderings specific to social identities.



*Figure 5. Olivia's Artwork*

The phenomenon, expressions of social identities, opened up while I experienced the contexts of data-gathering and analysis through hearing the often-silenced student voice in research. With classrooms full of individuals and class lists changing year-to-year, it is imperative to acknowledge the multiplicity within classrooms and that students are active learners, decision makers, and problem solvers. Culturally responsive teaching with a focus on social identities embraces the inherent qualities of mind and character that comprise the process in which students can construct and demonstrate their

understandings “to and through student’s culture,” as Gay (2002) suggests. I completed a number of data sources during visits in a third grade classroom throughout 12 weeks, two to three days per week. The data sources from which the tentative manifestations unfolded are referenced in Table 9.

Table 9  
*Align Data Sources with Research Questions*

Primary Research Questions	Data Sources 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Classroom Specific Context
Q1. How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade classroom?	<p>Transcripts from audio-recorded classroom lived experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each session in the classroom for 12 weeks (two-three visits per week)</li> <li>• Reading small groups for 6 weeks; 2 days per week</li> </ul> <p>Researcher’s post-reflexivity journal/Field notes of shared experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before, during, and after each daily session for 12 weeks</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom</li> </ul> <p>Student writing samples and artifacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content-specific activities during 12 weeks (5 specific activities: autobiographical poster, family quilt square, goal writing, poetry unit, Who I am book writing)</li> <li>• Collaborative learning groups &amp; whole group instruction time</li> <li>• Book Group 6 weeks; 2 days per week</li> <li>• Reading small groups</li> </ul> <p>Autobiographical and biographical writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative learning groups &amp; whole group instruction time</li> <li>• 2 week social studies unit; 3 days per week</li> <li>• 1 week language arts activity; 2 days per week</li> </ul>
Q2. How do third graders' narratives express equity through multimodal learning	<p>Transcripts from audio-recorded classroom experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each session in the classroom for 12 weeks (two-three visits per week)</li> </ul>

<p>in classrooms?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading small groups for 6 weeks; 2 days per week</li> </ul> <p>Letter writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading small groups for 1 week; 2 days per week</li> </ul> <p>Storytelling using wordless pictures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Whole group instruction 1 week; 3 days</li> </ul> <p>Selected books used as read aloud and book groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature selection questionnaire; 1 day</li> </ul> <p>Student Artifacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts, Math, and Social Studies for 12 weeks; 2 to 3 days per week</li> <li>• Collaborative learning groups &amp; whole group instruction</li> <li>• Math small groups</li> </ul> <p>Researcher's post-reflexivity journal/Field notes of shared experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before, during, and after each daily session for 12 weeks; 2 to 3 days per week</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom</li> </ul>
<p>Q3. What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices?</p>	<p>Transcripts from audio-recorded classroom experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each session in the classroom for 12 weeks (two-three visits per week)</li> <li>• Reading small groups for 6 weeks; 2 days per week</li> </ul> <p>Students' written lived experiences descriptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading small groups for 6 weeks; 2 days per week</li> </ul> <p>Collaborative learning groups &amp; whole group instruction for 2 weeks; 2 days per week</p> <p>Student Artifacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts, Math, and Social Studies for 12 weeks; 2 to 3 days per week</li> <li>• Collaborative learning groups &amp; whole group instruction</li> <li>• Math small groups</li> </ul> <p>Researcher's post-reflexivity journal/ Field notes of shared experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before, during, and after each daily session for 12 weeks; 2 to 3 days per week</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom</li> </ul>

### **Research Component #3: Make a *Post-Reflexion* Plan**

Writing in my journal before, during, and after each of my classroom visits allowed me to express my thoughts and wonderings while I practiced post-reflexivity. Before I began data collection, I wrote about prior beliefs and assumptions to begin to make sense of the phenomena related to social identities. I questioned my understanding of identity, specifically social identities, in the context of classrooms. How do I define identity? How do I want to define and highlight classroom identities, both claimed as well as assigned by self or others? I believe who students are at school can vary from who they are at home, for example. I wondered about what defines a diverse classroom. How do I define diverse and diversity as a whole context, specifically in classrooms? As I reflect on my experiences as a classroom teacher, and what I value most, it is building relationships with students and allowing them to borrow my belief in them until they believe in themselves that they will be successful. As a preschool teacher, an elementary teacher, a middle school teacher, and now a college professor, I spend the first weeks of school building a sense of community and really getting to know my students. I start by sharing pieces of my personal and professional life and ask them to let me know when we make a connection. I share pictures, stories, artifacts, and, most importantly, time. As a community, time is spent to learn about each other, families, and interests so we can spend time making connections and discovering similarities and differences. One of my key activities I ask students to complete is a personal autobiography. I have taught various ages and the autobiography has looked differently. However, the intention has

remained the same, which is to share information to help me, as a teacher, to be the best teacher I can be to this particular classroom community. Autobiographies provide a window into the type of learner students might be, interests they have, experiences they have enjoyed or did not particularly like, as well as what their discourse is like. The purpose of the autobiography in narrative form is for students to tell their story. The purpose of the autobiography is to have individuals focus their thinking about their own assumptions and biases related to diversity and how perspectives are influenced.

Something I took time to look deeper into with this study was what identity role I would maintain for this research. I view identity as a story that can illuminate the way someone can organize and understand experiences. When thinking about my dissertation study I started by recognizing a few things I was requiring of myself as a researcher. 1) My work needed to be with young children and have their voice write the story of my text. 2) I wanted to teach with the classroom teacher; I did not want to be an observer in the classroom. 3) Using instructional strategies that are considered culturally responsive was important to me. 4) Investigating how children view themselves through social identities seemed connected to culturally responsive teaching.

A bias I hold is that children begin to form their identities within the contexts of family, community, education, and the world. *Who am I?* is a question I asked when trying to define the term identity, especially in relation to characteristics, traits, and qualities. Many classrooms begin the school year with “Who am I” and “Getting to know you” activities. However, I continued to question which instructional practices and units of study are being completed because of the information learned during those activities.



For my study, I wanted to explore social identity characteristics and how understanding positions of others may influence children's understanding of and empathy for others. Opportunities and relationships tend to provide social identity labels that students bring to the classroom. Expectations and feelings of empowerment, or lack of empowerment, reinforce social identity through lived experiences. I believe individual's past and present, as well as environment and experiences, help shift and mold identities and yet also make them ever-evolving.

Being in the elementary schools as an assistant professor, I heard teachers talking all the time about how they need to be culturally responsive teachers. Often teachers say they are not even sure what being a culturally responsive teacher means, especially in rural school districts. I have had teachers tell me, "We are really not very diverse here." I believe diverse classrooms are more than just visual: more than just race. The diverse makeup of students encompasses backgrounds, family, socioeconomic status, life experiences or lack thereof, family dynamics, and more. I believe every single classroom, wherever it is located, is a diverse classroom, more specifically when the definition expands beyond the typical race, class, gender, and academic performance constructs.

On my first day of class, my students and I make a name tag with the name we wish to be called in the center, and the four corners highlight pieces of who we are. One of the corners was a cultural group we belong to, another was a favorite thing about school, third corner was an interest or hobby we have, and the last corner was someone who has made an impact in our life.

I explain to my students who are becoming teacher candidates that activities we do in the classroom are modeled for them so they can use a similar activity when teaching. I decided to practice what I preach, and this activity was one of the first things I did when I arrived in the third grade classroom. It was so interesting working with 8 and 9 years olds, explaining the four corners and providing an example that would allow them to expand their thinking and not just copy my example. Third graders asked fewer questions than my college students! Table 10 indicates student voice and response, but it should be noted that when I used the term cultural group, Maya asked, *“Do you mean a group we fit in with? Like people we are like or want to be like?”*

Table 10  
*Focal Student Name Tags*

Name	Cultural Group	Favorite Thing About School	Interest or Hobby	Someone who has made an impact in our life
Olivia	American	Read	Eat	Maya (Classmate)
Mitchell	Secret Club (boys and girls are in it)	Recess	Making crafts	Shedd Aquarium Workers Goldfish (pet)
Izzy	My Family	Math	Read	Dad
Maya	Mexican	Reading	Sleep	R5 (Favorite band)
Michael	Gamer	Math	Video games and legos	Family

### **Write an “Initial Post-Reflexion Statement”**

Reflexivity is a term that has different meanings in various contexts. In general, the term reflexivity means reflecting; specifically, in my research, post-reflexion or reflexivity is the act of reflecting upon the data collection and interpretation processes. In

my study, I embraced a post-reflexion statement that supports the approach to my data collection. I set out to collectively explore students' perceptions of identity in a third grade classroom and investigated the intersection of culturally responsive pedagogy and students' perception of social identities. One of my guiding assumptions is that most classroom teachers believe they are supporting social identities, yet the students do not concur. I believe many classroom teachers want to develop culturally responsive teaching strategies and assume they can read a book or attend professional development to support their work to become culturally responsive. Another assumption I maintain is that teachers are currently focused on standards, curriculum, and standardized assessments and that making personal connections with students to support identity is not occurring as much as they think or would like it to. I believe teachers are inquiring and gathering identity data but do not use that information in their planning and instructional practices. Being an assistant professor in an early childhood program and observing student teachers, I noted in many classrooms that the focus was on content first rather than building relationships, empowering students, and developing students' social identities to increase a sense of belonging to school and learning. People want to feel cared for and valued by the significant people in the world. Students are no different, especially in relation to their teacher.

I believe students are covered by labels, some self-created and some given to them by other people, such as their parents, siblings, friends, classmates, and teachers. Culturally responsive teachers can add and remove labels that support equity in the classroom. The data I share in Chapter 4 highlight five focal students with whom I built a

relationship. My intention was to expand my understanding and definition of diversity by listening to the expressions of these students' social identities.

## **Chapter 4: Intentionality, Tentative Manifestations, and Data**

*“Make people feel included and not left out.”*

Olivia, age 9

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of data collected, while giving attention to five focal students. The first section provides a statement of what I take *intentionality* to mean, drawing on Merleau-Ponty (1964). Following, I share how my understanding of *intentionality* is used to examine the phenomenon of expressions of social identities for third graders. I then delineate how I used Vagle’s (2014) whole-part-whole process to review and analyze the data to open up tentative manifestations. To conclude, I document how I utilized a post-intentional lens to explore the changing nature of purposeful relationships associated with the phenomenon under study. I then identify five tentative manifestations that bring expressions of social identities into focus. I organize each tentative manifestation by sharing a brief summary to reveal the context and then call attention to data collection sources in the form of multimodal evidence, just as narrative inquiry and post-intentional phenomenology allowed.

### **Research Component #4: Read and Write Your Way through Your Data in a Systematic, Responsive Manner**

When I first began reading and writing through my gathered data, I found I was wondering about my understanding about intentionality. I spent time with Merleau-Ponty as my chosen theorist to help guide my thinking from a phenomenology perspective. To systematically read and write through my data, I followed the whole-part-whole process Vagle (2014) outlined, which requires six steps for phenomenological analysis. After reading over my data through the whole-part-whole process, I identified each of the

five tentative manifestations with a title. I worked through data “parts” while I thought “about focal meanings (e.g., moments) in relation to the whole” (Vagle, 2014, p. 97).

### **Finding Intentionality**

Merleau-Ponty (1964) described intentionality as the invisible thread that connects humans to their surroundings whether they are conscious of the connection or not. In an effort to theorize the notion of intentionality, Freeman and Vagle (2009) conceptualizing Merleau-Ponty (1964) stated that humans live in both time and space, and connectedness is a part of the experience. Intentionality can be a difficult concept to grasp, because it has multiple meanings; it is a link people have to the world in which they find themselves. People in everyday contact with the world bring intentionality forward, not in the sense of choice or intent, but, as Merleau-Ponty (1964) shared, the human body does not “have” a body rather he/she “is” his/her body. The *lifeworld* is our being in the world - how humans relate to and interact with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Therefore, researchers who use post-intentional phenomenology must try and learn to see the invisible, listen to what is silent, and consider knowledge gained as incomplete and always changing (Vagle, 2014). For that reason, I carefully selected the notion of expressions of social identities for my study, as I was not analyzing individual meanings, or trying to define social identities, but rather ways social identities “come-to-be” (Vagle, 2014, p. 112).

To me, intentionality is being present in the classroom and listening to student voice, as I did not set out to document what *is* social identity, but to document intentionality or the thoughts, beliefs, and hopes students have in relationship to their

social identities. As Vagle (2014) stated, “Intentionality is running all over the place, all the time-at times with clarity, but most often in the gnarliness of life” (p. 113). I believe classrooms are full of “gnarliness” as tangled stories of students’ experiences every moment, each day. Through my various experiences in the classroom, I noticed teachers tend to be more focused on the teaching of content, and possibly do not pay enough attention to how the tangled stories impact how students learn and behave in the classroom. I wondered if I were part of a third grade classroom, what would I discover and document about social identities, equity, and multimodal practices? If I were intentionally present with the tangled stories, what would I find as lived experiences? Would I be able to help the teacher of record improve their instructional practices to be more culturally responsive by using the tangled stories to support expressions of social identities? Paying attention to the tentative and fleeting moments opens up the phenomenon and is a commitment of post-intentional phenomenology. The experiences I gained from data collection became identified as tentative manifestations that were presented through contexts and situations from a third grade perspective relating to the students’ expressions of social identity.

### **Seeking Tentative Manifestations**

After listening to transcriptions and reading through the data, I identified five tentative manifestations. Since tentative manifestations are produced through contexts and situations, I recognized that I am not in dialogue with themes, but rather moments presented themselves as tentative manifestations during my time in the classroom. I

documented lived classroom experiences through multimodal practices selected based on the tangled stories students in this particular classroom shared. Therefore, these practices may or may not be replicated at a later date or with a similar study and yield the same results.

I found myself in the lived classroom experiences as a co-teacher and active participant in a third grade classroom. I continually asked myself, “How is it to experience expressions of social identity in the classroom?” (Vagle, 2014). My post-reflexive journal allowed me to be in dialogue with my thoughts, wonderings, and feelings. I documented these ideas on a daily basis, as well as how I positioned myself through the exploration of expressions of social identity and lived experience. As I reflected, I focused on students’ expressions of social identities through their language, stories, and other artistic creations during classroom instruction. I sought out events or artifacts, such as texts and images that allowed for student voice to be heard.

My study was focused around one primary question to help me concentrate on what student voice was saying about social identities. I included two secondary questions to help me analyze the contexts in which social identities were examined. These questions will also support duplication of my study in the future. My guiding question was, “How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom?”

Secondary questions that focus the work included:

- a. How do third graders' narratives express equity through multimodal learning in classrooms?



- c. b. What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices?

The above questions were integrated into my data collection journey. Once I collected data, I followed the whole-part-whole process (Vagle, 2014) outlined below, which required six steps for phenomenological analysis.

1. Holistic reading of entire text. At this time I read the data but did not take notes, as the intent was to become familiar with the data. I found it difficult to not highlight, make notes, or color code by certain data.
2. First *line-by-line* reading. At this time I took attentive notes as well as marked up sections of text that contained preliminary importance as a tentative manifestation and needed further exploration. I found myself writing questions about what took place and if I needed more direction or reflection during this line-by-line reading, as well.
3. Follow-up questions. At this time I reviewed notes, questions, and markings in the text to formulate follow-up questions for each participant that would help to clarify what they meant. This allowed me to have one-on-one discussions with my focal participants. I found it challenging not to direct in these conversations but simply ask, for example, “Why do you think that,” “What do you mean,” and “Tell me more about.” The majority of my discussions took place during daily learning activities.
4. Second *line-by-line* reading. In this step, I worked with expressing the meanings based on previous notes, questions, follow-up, and markings with

the text. For each focal participant, I created a new document that contained parts I felt could contribute to the phenomenological text, which would be organized into tentative manifestations. During this time, I questioned whether I should have included more focal participants, yet ultimately decided to stay with the five focal students I had selected.

5. Third *line-by-line* reading. During this reading, I analyzed the data through feelings and ideas I had about each expression of social identities focal participants shared. Data was collected as textual representation from student voice through dialogue transcription, student-created drawings, student-created text, and photographs I took. I found that color-coding feelings and ideas expressed by focal participants and myself helped me to see the patterns and connections of focal participants' expressions of social identities.
6. Subsequent readings. Reading through all participants' data helped me characterize tentative manifestations I discovered in the lived experiences of the classroom. The data exposed five tentative manifestations clearly to me, with a few additional tentative manifestations to be considered. However, I decided to focus on the five most dominant displayed (p. 98-99).

Seeing the invisible, hearing the often silenced, and experiencing the processes of data-gathering and analysis helped me to see the phenomenon of expressions of social identities. When I first did a holistic reading of my data, I tended to tell the stories of the focal students in chronological order, by content area, or by instructional strategies. As I read the transcription line by line, took notes, and reviewed student work, I realized

focusing on a content area or chronological sequence would be more traditional and would not allow me to be dialogic with the tentative manifestations. Listening intentionally for expressions of students' social identities and equity in the classroom, I explored follow-up questions that could inform the relationships between social identities, multimodal learning, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Once I had a document for each focal student, I highlighted student voice through individual work and in different modes.

### **Tentative Manifestations**

Reading and writing my way through the data in a systematic way allowed me to think about “what might mark the phenomenon” in order to recognize the tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2014, p. 134). As I worked through the whole-part-whole process, I began to see tentative manifestations I identified and characterized as the phenomena expressions of social identities of third graders. Working through the data, I tended to stay with where I was “certain” and backed into the safe rational Vagle (2014) advised could occur. There were moments I focused on “what might appear uncertain in order to see what the phenomena could come to be” (Vagle, 2014, p. 136). After I completed the whole-part-whole analysis of the data, I acknowledged five tentative manifestations that reinforced the phenomena expressions of social identities.

**Tentative manifestation #1: Ability and interests.** The first tentative manifestation I noticed was ability and interests. When students were asked a question about themselves such as, “Tell me about who you are and what makes you unique/special,” or “What characteristics make you different from your siblings and

peers?” their initial response was something connected to their abilities or interests, such as the sports they played. Students rarely shared their abilities in academics; however, when prompted for their favorite part of school or something they were good at in school, the majority of the students mentioned math or reading. For example, at the start of the New Year, students wrote goals they had for their 3<sup>rd</sup> grade year. Interests and abilities were listed on each student goal balloon that hung in the classroom for all to read. For example, the five-focal students’ goals are listed in Table 11 below.

Table 11  
*Student Goals as Written by Focal Students*

Izzy: I want to help others by offering to play. I want to get better at handwriting. I want to learn more about animals.
Maya: I want to help others by listening to their problems if needed. I want to be better at my multiplication facts. I want to learn more about the countries.
Michael: I want to help others be kind. I really want to play more video games. I want to be better at math, read, social studies. I want to learn more about great white shark.
Mitchell: I want to help others by being nice to them. I want to learn more about rollercoasters, turtles, and my teacher.
Olivia: I want to help others by being nice. I want to learn more about dogs. I want to be better at my homework.

Another example of students sharing information about their abilities and interests occurred when using a reading strategy to support a discussion around identity. Teachers in the school district where this study took place were encouraged to incorporate strategies from *The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skill Readers* by Jennifer Serravallo (2015). One strategy utilized during my study was 7.22 in

the book: Identifiers, Identity, and Ideas. The strategy was to “Consider the identities of one character. Think about how their identity relates to their problem(s) or what they learn in the story. State a theme in universal language” (Serravallo, 2015, p. 215). There were various categories listed for suggestion, yet some were not appropriate for the context of the book the students were exploring: *How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay* by Alvarez (2002). Based on previous classroom discussions and the topics within the text, I selected the categories of religion, gender, ability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and age for this discussion activity, which really led to students talking of abilities and interest in detail. I began with how to pronounce each category and asking students what they thought the word meant. From discussion, students began linking categories to text evidence and the characters of the book, specifically Miguel. I used the following guiding questions for discussion for this particular activity: “Let’s think about character identity,” “How does character identity matter to the story?” and “What else do we know about the character? Why might that matter?” The purpose of this activity was to “tap in to some of the possible messages or lessons in the story” while making personal connections to the story and characters (Serravallo, 2015, p. 215). My journal highlighted the discussion and thoughts students shared in the brainstorming chart, which is shown in Figure 6 below.

*Today’s discussion with the Tía Lola book group revolved around identity. I was not sure how it was going to go using such broad and possibly unfamiliar categories, but I was glad I gave it a try. One of the most surprising discoveries for me was students did not know the category of religion. I even prompted them by asking if anyone went to church or class on Wednesday nights at their church.*

*(Which of course I am really not suppose to do, but I just couldn't resist!) Not one of the six students could label if their church was Catholic, Lutheran, or another denomination. Three of them said they went to church and then Brennan actually recalled his church was Lutheran when he said his church name. I assumed gender would be boy/girl. It was quite surprising however, when Mitchell said if he could change his name it would be to Megan. And then promptly followed up by saying, "No that is too much of a girl name." No one in the group giggled, rolled their eyes, or even really responded to Mitchell. Socio-economic status also stumped the group. However, one of them said it has to do with money and if you have a lot or a little. Which then sparked the discussion about the size or type of your house. I believed the term ability would be the easiest one for the students to relate to and understand, and I was correct. It was amazing they were able to pull out Miguel's abilities to add to the chart as well, but they did express that they did not have much in common with him based on his ability. We did talk about that as an assumption as we are not sure what all his abilities are, just as we do not discuss all their abilities on a daily basis. Students were in agreement with that and talked about how they like to talk about their abilities outside of school, such as sports, more than their school/academic abilities. One student said sometimes it feels like bragging if you say you are good at math, but it is cool when you say you are good at a sport. I wonder where that comes from, as I know my own children seem to think the same way. Piano, guitar, and art were new abilities shared during this discussion. All members of this book group are either 8 or 9. I*

was not surprised that they did not really discuss being the same age as Miguel. They were more focused on similarities than differences and once again talked about what they had in common. Olivia said Miguel's parents argued and hers did to. Maya shared Miguel is like her because he has a sister, his parents are divorced, and his parents argue. Mitchell agreed that just like him, Miguel had a sister. He also talked about how Tia Lola had an aunt that did magic and he really likes magic. The last category of ethnicity was one I thought they would need more explaining on. However, once Maya said, "Oh, like I am Mexican?" the group understood. Maya decided to write Spanish because she speaks Spanish, rather than write Mexican. English, German, French, Norwegian, and Welch were included in the discussion. It was interesting to me that race was not written or discussed throughout this entire discussion. (Researcher Post-Reflection Journal)

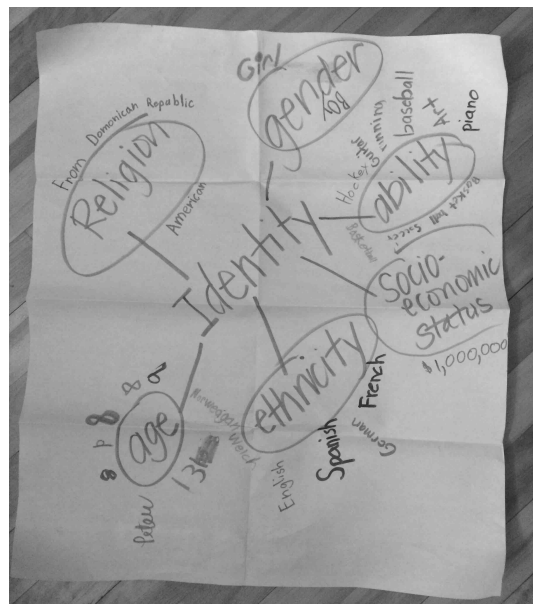


Figure 6. Identity Discussion Brainstorm Chart

Mitchell had labeled himself a gamer and often shared that he really likes video games. When we were discussing identity and the category of ability, Mitchell debated about writing down video games as he said he has a natural ability to play video games. As can be seen in Figure 6, he decided against writing it under ability and decided not to write anything at all. The next day, when I arrived in the classroom, the discussion of video games began again as Mitchell shared a story about what I thought was his new watch. My journal captured some of the conversation we had about this interest of video game playing.

*Today Mitchell came to school with a new “watch”. When I inquired about his new watch, he shared with an eye roll that it is a fitness tracker that monitors his steps every day. Usually Mitchell is quite animated when he talks, but not for this conversation. He told me he has to wear it and if he meets his daily goal he can play video games. And then followed up saying, “the eye roll wasn’t toward you for calling it a watch, it is because I really don’t like tracking my steps.” I wondered if this was a parent requirement, if his siblings had the same guidelines, and how I felt about that form of documenting fitness for video game play.*

(Researcher Post-Reflection Journal)

**Tentative manifestation #2: Belonging (fitting in).** The focal students talked about a sense of belonging or fitting in within their family and school contexts. Students often asked to work in partners or small groups, and did not take issue when they were partnered up or placed in small groups. They did not complain or request to be with their friends or to change partners.



Students created a family page in the “All About Me” books. The mini books were written to have students share important information about them and see what connections they may have with their classmates. Typically, these types of activities take place at the beginning of the year. We decided to try it later in the school year when students felt more comfortable with their peers and could possibly share more personal information. Maya and Olivia compared their books (Figures 7 and 8) and talked about how they are both from divorced families but made their pictures look different. Maya shared that she thought it would be more obvious to her classmates that she had two families if she had two pages. Olivia shared that she wanted to fit in like most of her peers and to show she has one family, even though she has a separated family living in two houses. Both girls discussed the desire to make connections with peers who had similar family dynamics. Michael shared his families in a unique representation in Figure 9. He also divided the page to show his family is divided.

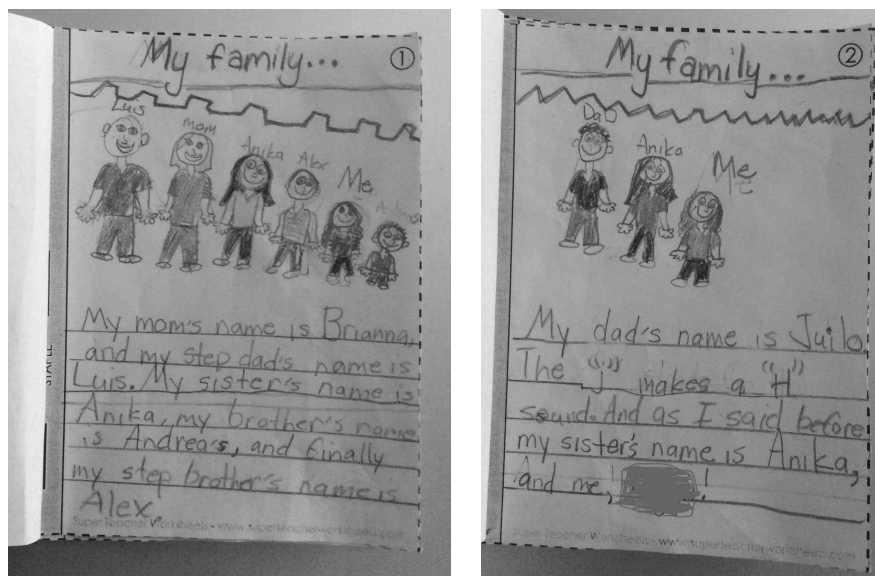


Figure 7. Maya's All About Me Family Page

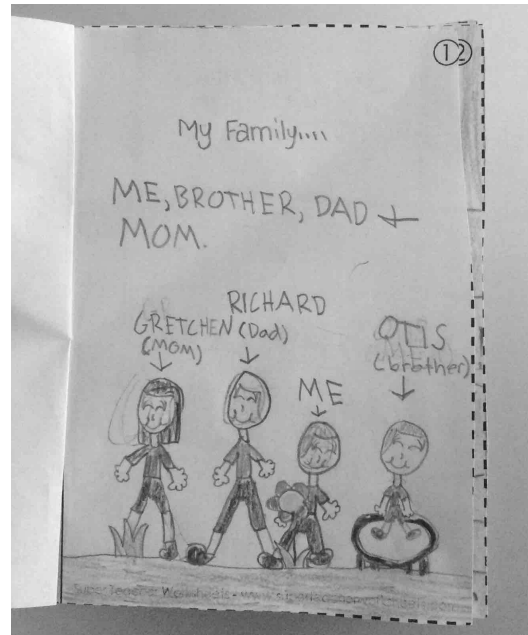


Figure 8. Olivia's All About Me Family Page

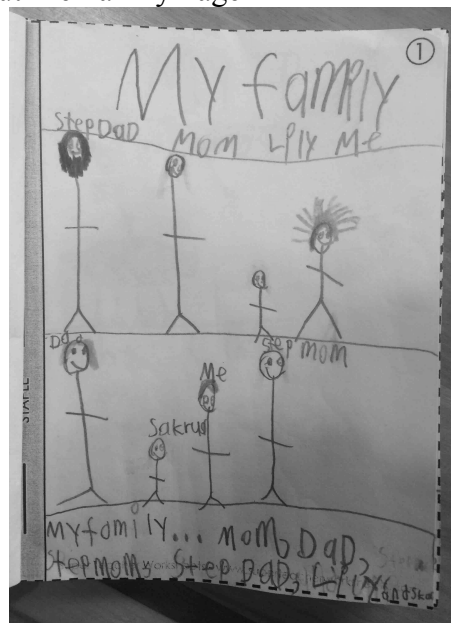


Figure 9. Michael's All About Me Family Page

The *All About Me* book provided a way for me to gain insight on students' perspectives that may not have been available otherwise. Each book had blank pages and there were suggestions about what each page should include. One suggestion was "a

place I'd want to be." Maya had already shared a few times that she was Mexican, so it did not surprise me that a page in her book said, "A place I'd love to be is Mexico. Half of my family lives there." Maya illustrated the page with pictures of "stuff to bring" which were shorts, sunglasses, and a tank top. When I asked how she felt about her family being there and if she would like to live there instead of Wisconsin, she responded with the following narrative:

I feel like I would belong more in Mexico. More people are like me there and some of my family lives there that I don't see. I would read and talk in Spanish all the time and it would be really cool. I don't do that here. I don't think I want to live there, I like living here, but I would fit in in Mexico. (Maya, personal interaction)

During another discussion with Maya about the books she is currently reading, she shared some information about her family, specifically her half brother and wanting him to move to the states from El Salvador. Maya was concerned about learning more Spanish so he felt like he fit in when he moved here.

Maya: I have a stepbrother down in El Salvador. We are trying to get him up here.

Me: Oh, you do?

Maya: Yes, we are for sure that he is coming sometime in the summer.

Me: Permanently or for a visit?

Maya: He is my step-dad's son so he is coming here for permanent.

Me: That is exciting. What do you think is taking so long?

Maya: I don't know. I am not in to the details. Actually I feel pretty good having

him live with us. But it will be kind of complicated because I don't know that much Spanish.

Me: How old is he?

Maya: He is my sister's age, but he is a little older and shorter.

Me: Does he know English?

Maya: A little bit, but he speaks English in El Salvador. He lives with his grandma and grandpa because his mom lives in Washington. I need to learn more Spanish so I can help him feel comfortable and fit in here. I keep working on it and I am glad our book has Spanish in it to help me.

During book group time, students reviewed character traits and text evidence that helped readers learn about character traits. After discussing how the book character, Alvin Ho, is afraid of school, I asked students, "Why do you think the author shared that point of view with readers?" I then followed up with students and asked, "What happens to make you want to come to school?" as most students talked about not understanding why someone would be afraid of school.

Cole: It's pretty weird not to like school. Actually if I didn't like school and I was trying to avoid school I think I could possibly like this book because it would give me some good advice.

Me: Why are you not afraid of school?

Cole: No one yells at you.

Izzy: It's a place that is usually calm and it's a place I can go without my sister.

Me: What do you like about school?

Cole: I love doing math; I fit in, especially with the iPads.

Izzy: I feel like I am part of a group because I basically have everything that other people have at school. It's pretty fair at school so I don't worry. I just fit in.

Mollee: It makes me feel included when people listen to me. And when people respond to me.

Cole was not a focal student in my study but it is important to share that he stated he would like school better with more iPad time. As a matter of fact, during one of our math station sessions, he became quite upset when I asked him to put the iPad down and move on to the next station. I wasn't requiring him to move on from his work, but he was trying to complete a multiplication level for a classmate. He looked at me with disappointment and tears in his eyes and told me kids like him when he helps them. Even though teachers do not like that he helps others to advance in the game, it is how he makes friends and fits in to the classroom. He wrote in his *All About Me* book something he loves (not likes) about school is iPads. Figure 10 captures Cole with the iPad: comfortable, engaged, and working on math games. All other students wrote something they liked about school, and typically responded with math or reading.



*Figure 10.* Cole with the iPad

During book groups, it became even more evident that students really wanted to discuss and interact while trying to fit in with each other through discourse. I used a visual learning strategy called “tug-of-war” to spark discussion with small groups. The idea was to present a fairness dilemma or an opinion question. Students were then asked to identify the factors that “pull” at each side and how the two sides could become a tug of war. Students were asked to try and think of reasons on the other side and provide discussion. To conclude, I found it was helpful to create “what if?” questions to further explore the topic and promote discussion.

Me: The first question for tug-of-war is, “Do you like the book *Tía Lola*?”

Maya: kind of...because I like reading books with action and it’s kind of like okay. What I do like is I kind of relate to what is happening in the book. You know with my Spanish and a split family and a brother.

Me: Second question, “Do you feel like you belong in my classroom? Yes or no?”

Maya: Like you fit in and you’re not left out?

Olivia: I put mine there because (note: Olivia's post-it note was in the middle of the tagboard but closer to the "no" side), like when we are playing a game they will say I ruined it or sometimes I get left out and that makes me feel bad.

Mitchell: I could be at home because I am really tired, but I kind of fit in with school and I kind of don't fit in with school because...kind of like Olivia...I don't always get included and I feel different sometimes.

Maya: Because I have a lot of friends, I fit in with the schoolwork they give us.

Alisa: Sometimes I don't fit in because I get bored and I don't like to get bored.

Me: Why do you get bored?

Alisa: Because sometimes I get things fast and then I am done when other people aren't so then I read and sometimes I get in trouble for reading when I shouldn't be, like in math.

Chad: This is a trick question...I am in one spot or two. Well I have some friends, but sometimes I don't always get a long with everyone. When we do activities I feel like we belong. Like in reading groups and math groups.

Izzy: I am putting my post-it in the middle of the rope, not at an end because sometimes I get along with everyone and sometimes I don't. Some people say compliments and sometimes they make fun of your work or projects.

My journal captured interaction of a classroom strategy, bucket fillers, that was intended to have students in the classroom feel good and support each other by being kind and thoughtful. However, the strategy did not build equity among classmates and peers.

*I had just finished book group time, Izzy and two classmates stayed at the back table to talk. One of the students thanked Izzy for putting a “slip in her bucket.” I asked them to tell me about the slips and the bucket and they proceeded to talk about “bucket fillers.” Sonja shared she really doesn’t like the buckets because she never has slips in her bucket even though she doesn’t cause trouble and tries to be nice to everyone. Izzy shared she felt bad because she had a lot of slips in her bucket. Before I could ask any questions, the bell rang and it was time to pack up for the day. This interaction had me really thinking about classroom management strategies and community building activities. I knew the next day I want to inquire with Izzy a little more about this bucket and how she felt about Sonja thanking her for the slip and sharing her feelings how she felt bad about not having many slips. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

When I inquired with Izzy about the bucket the next day, the following conversation took place, which indicated disconnect between the intention of the bucket and the students in the classroom:

Me: Yesterday, Sonja shared how she was feeling bad because she didn’t have very many slips in her bucket.

Izzy: I know; I put one in her bucket.

Me: I heard you say that. You pick up on how other people are feeling. Why do you think that is?

Izzy: Well, it just makes me feel bad when someone is left out. Like if we are playing tag and someone is down and they have been down basically the whole



recess, I will get whoever needs to get out for them. But like, when Sonja had zero in there, it made me feel really bad because I had like 10 in mine. So I gave her one saying that she is a good friend and that made her feel really good.

Me: How do you think you notice that about other people?

Izzy: Like how they feel bad?

Me: Yes.

Izzy: Because sometimes, they like trying their very best to be nice and everything but no one notices. I know she is trying to fit in and have friends in our class. I feel bad that not everyone notices.

Me: How do the slips make you feel?

Izzy: Good and bad. I like reading when people say nice things or give me compliments. But I feel bad that some people have more slips than others. It just doesn't seem fair. And I think people feel like they don't belong if they only have a slip or two. Well, that is how I would feel I think.

Through our time reading the book, *How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay*, a topic of discussion was belonging. Students in this book group often shared that Miguel was not really excited that his eclectic aunt was in town from the Dominican Republic, and he felt he wouldn't fit in at school or in town with her around. Frequently, students said they felt bad for Miguel but they also felt bad for Tía Lola. As we were reading the book, we came across the following quote: "You have to love people for who they are; then they will become all they can be" (Alvarez, 2015, p. 25). Olivia, Mitchell, and Maya were asked

what the quote from the book meant to them. Their responses were thoughtful and shared feelings of fitting in and a sense of belonging by not having judgment.

Olivia: Don't look at them for what they have but for what's on the inside. What does it mean that they will become all they can be? Like I will fit in even if I am different? I think we are supposed to be nice even when people are different from us. Make people feel included and not left out.

Mitchell: Don't judge a book by its cover. Kind of saying like, the opposite of don't...ok, it's don't judge a person by the outside. It means people can be anything they want when they feel good about how people are treating them.

Maya: That you don't have to like them, but love them. Like you have to love people and they will do all they can do to be good, happy, and who they are. You know, like we are all different but that is cool and we should be glad. But sometimes we try to be like other people because we think that would be cool.

As students were reading about a main character, Alvin Ho, who is afraid of everything, the discussion led to creating a brainstorming chart of things Alvin is afraid of. As a small group, the students and I sat around the tag board poster and individually wrote down words or pictures of a few things we were each afraid of. At first students stated they were really not afraid of anything, especially nothing Alvin was afraid of. After a few minutes of documenting our fears, we then shared things Alvin was afraid of that we could recall from reading. Once we had nine items listed in the middle of the paper, we took turns circling which of those things we were also afraid of, which Figure

11 shows. Based on the list of things Alvin was afraid of, I asked, “What conclusions would someone make about Alvin, his family, and his classmates?” Students made assumptions and drew conclusions, which sparked Izzy to say,

I wouldn't want people drawing conclusions about me just because I was afraid of something. I think you need to ask people why they are afraid and not just think it is because they are just scared. Maybe something happened that made them afraid. They might have a story to tell you that explains it. I didn't think I had anything in common with Alvin, but now I see we have more in common than I thought. (Personal interaction)

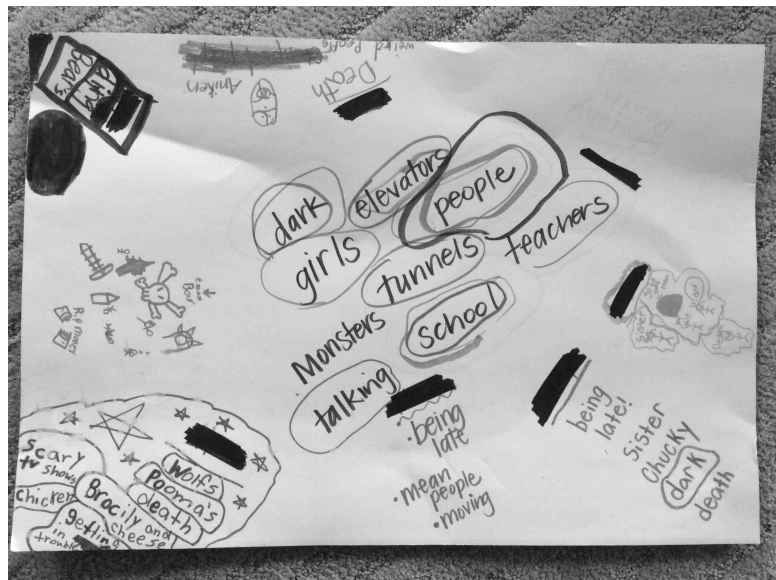


Figure 11. Alvin Ho Brainstorming Chart

Alvin Ho claims to be allergic to everything! The small book group thought that was quite funny at first and then a bit annoying as the book went on. Together the students and I discussed how connections could help us feel like we fit in with other people.

Me: Have you ever felt like you might be allergic to school?

Izzy: No! I love it! Even when I am sick, I want to go to school.

Cole: Me, because I don't get to use the computer a lot and play games. I'd like school better if I could do that. And if I could use the iPad more.

Mollee: I do because I don't like getting things wrong or getting in trouble.

Sometimes I get a nervous tummy when our class gets in trouble, even though I know I didn't do anything wrong.

Students expressed ideas of belonging when as a whole group, a discussion of family occurred. To begin the three-day learning segment on immigration, I started the lesson by writing the word family in a brainstorming web chart, and then students were asked what the word means to them. I asked, "What words do you think of when I say the word "family?" This activity took about 10 minutes for students to feel as though their voice was heard and all their contributions were included. The classroom teacher wrote their contributions in the form of a web diagram shown in Figure 12. One student shared, "Some of the things we said we have to do in our classroom too. It is like our classroom is our family. We have to help others and play games to fit in, otherwise, people don't like you." Students mentioned much of what they shared was also about their classroom and noted some of the same things need to be done to fit in with their classmates.

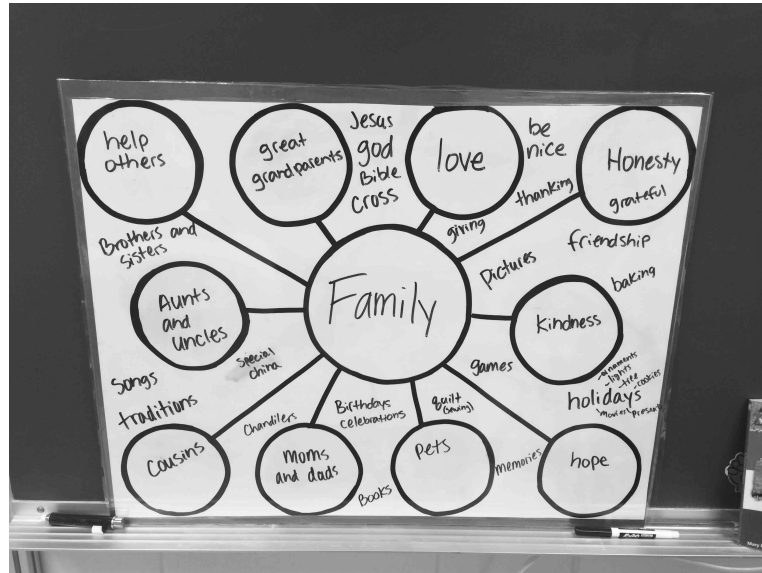


Figure 12. Family Word Web Brainstorm Chart

**Tentative manifestation #3: Interaction.** Interaction was another tentative manifestation that I noticed in several contexts during discussions and writing tasks. Interaction occurred with peers and teachers, but students also discussed how they individually interact with technology such as iPads and video games, and also with books. Most commonly, students asked if they could work together, in small groups or with partners, as they preferred to interact with someone from their class, not just their friend. For example, Izzy shared that she really enjoyed working in small groups and talking about reading.

Izzy: By the way, thank you for choosing this book.

Me: You're welcome. Why do you say that?

Izzy: I just really like it and working together.

Me: What makes you like it?

Izzy: I don't know. I like working in small groups and talking about reading.

During social studies and the immigration unit, students and I discussed interaction through a few contexts. Role-play storytelling, transportation, communication, and belongings were discussed through oral discourse and picture books. Melanie, the teaching artist, and I performed an immigrant role-play storytelling from a suitcase to model the limited space, materials, and artifacts experienced by immigrants to share a historical perspective about interaction and immigration through the “big 6”: who, what, where, when, why, and how. I shared a personal family story of my great-grandmother, who emigrated from Italy, using pictures and artifacts such as a door charm, wooden spoon and apron, Pinocchio wooden doll, and a crucifix. Melanie played the role of my friend as shown in Figure 13, who had emigrated from Ireland, and asked me questions about my journey and my experience. Students were engaged for twenty minutes as Melanie and I talked back and forth to each other. There were questions after our “performance,” and some students tried to make personal connections with the story. For example, one student shared that her grandmother has a wooden spoon she always uses when she makes spaghetti. Another student said when they moved last year they had a lot of boxes and suitcases, not just one suitcase for their family.



*Figure 13. Role-Play Immigrant Storytellers*

Interaction through communication occurred regularly and with connections through shared text. From the family quilt project shown in Figure 3 (page 77), I learned students had divorced families, one family was from Mexico, and one family had family in Mexico and El Salvador; therefore this text was selected to support cultural sensitivity. The following discussion with the small group reading *Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay* confirmed that books can build a positive self-concept.

Me: Does anyone know the Spanish word, Beinvenido?

Maya: I know! I am Mexican.

Me: You are?

Maya: Yes! This is the first book I have read in school with Spanish in it.

Beinvenido is welcome. A is used for a girl and O is used for a boy.

Mitchell: They get the “A”, that’s not fair. Why are there different letters for boys and girls?

Maya: Because we are different.

Me: Maya, how do you use the language (Spanish)?

Maya: I can read some, speak more, and understand a lot. I can't write any Spanish words though.

Me: Does anyone in your family speak it (Spanish) fluently?

Maya: Um

Me: Do you know what fluently means?

Maya: Yes! My mom, she is Norwegian. My stepdad, he's from El Salvador. My dad, he's from Mexico.

Me: So who speaks fluently?

Maya: All of them!

Me: Will you help us with our Spanish and when there are words we don't know in the story?

Maya: Yes! No one has had me do that in school! I have never read a book with Spanish words in it in school or helped people in school learn Spanish.

Me: Why do you think that is?

Maya: I don't know. I haven't had a teacher pick a book or tell me about books that have Spanish in it.

Another partner activity was "Plan Your Conversation Poem" that allowed Michael and his partner to write a text. Michael was able to copy his partner's writing after creating the text together. This experience created a feeling of equity for Michael as



they had the same sheet and text. Michael said, “It is nice to be able to have the same sheet even though you can tell whose is whose because I write messy.”

Michael’s partner happened to be gone the day of the performance, and he asked if I would be his partner. After we practiced a few times, it was our turn to go in front of the class. Before we presented, Michael shared a few words of wisdom as the fire-breathing dragon, “It’s easier to play an animal than another person, I think. Everyone likes animals.” Figure 14 captures our experience together as a brave knight, who appeared to be a bit sassy, and a fire-breathing dragon, who appeared to be kind with a smile.



*Figure 14.* The Brave Knight and the Fire Breathing Dragon

Interaction through contact and touch does not happen often in this classroom. However, students liked to sit close to me when we were having book group. It was interesting to notice many of the students seemed to sit in the same place each time, and

by the same peers. When I would walk into the room, several students would interact with me by coming up and giving me a hug, tapping me on my arm to talk to me, or non-verbally communicating with a smile. Only during one visit was there some disappointment that I was there. It was the first beautiful day, and the other third grade classrooms were having a brain break outside. I recorded my feelings and assumptions of the disappointment as well as the origin for this experience in my journal.

*Each day I go into the classroom, I am greeted with excitement, smiles, and anxiety if they are not done with the assignment or reading. If they are behind, it is the first thing they tell me when I walk in the door. Today, I could tell something was going on because for the first time I heard, "She's here" in a disappointing tone. I tried to ignore it from a few students and not take it personally. I was thinking, maybe our book groups are too long, maybe they do not like the book, or maybe they are tired of me coming to their room. Just like any other day, I went to the back table, got organized and called the first table group over. The first question they asked me was if I colored my hair! HAHA! As a matter of fact, I had!*

*We did a quick check on what page everyone was in the book. I love this time and how the students just share the page and don't show any judgment. They all seem to be comfortable with their group and where they are. Originally we asked students not to bring the books home but students really wanted to bring them home, so I changed my mind and told them I trusted them to take care of the book and return them to school. They were so excited! They told me they don't always*

*have enough time to read in school so they can catch up at home. I started thinking; maybe this is why they were not excited to see me.*

*I soon found out the reason. I shared with the group that I was not going to be there tomorrow and three of them said, “yessss,” one started to giggle and another said she felt bad they said that. I asked why they were happy I wasn’t going to be there, and the reason...brain break! The other two third grade classrooms were outside for brain break. I asked if they liked book groups if it wasn’t nice outside? YES! They said they really like them. I then suggested that maybe the next time we have book group and it is nice outside we could go outside. They were so excited! According to these students, they NEVER go outside for brain break and one of the other classes goes out a lot. They enjoy interaction with other classrooms, the outdoors, and each other. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

On the last day of book groups, students were asked to document their three favorite parts of the book they read. They were happy to do so, especially when they realized we were going outside to do the work on clipboards! A few students looked at me with a smile and said, “You remembered!” Figure 15 shows interaction between students and their blending of book groups and separation of gender. The discourse between students sharing favorite parts of their book was not anticipated and yet engaged students in thinking about reading one of the other books read by their peers. It was interesting to see that two students with the same worksheet reflected on different books, three boys who read two different

books worked together, and five girls who read three different books all discussed their favorite parts of each story.



*Figure 15. Outdoor Classroom*

Students had a good rapport with each other (and their teacher) and generally got along quite well. This class actually was quite chatty, but through mostly positive interactions. Often times, students were asked to stop talking and to work by themselves; they were not being redirected for treating each other poorly or unfavorably. There were some great friendships detected by interaction through dialogue and non-verbal communication. Some of these relationships moved beyond same gender friendships, which was common in this classroom.

Olivia: Ahh, that was so embarrassing when Mitchell hugged me.

Me: I loved it when Mitchell hugged you.

Mitchell: Laughed.

Olivia: I like hugs, but it was embarrassing.

Me: Why were you the fairy princess and Maxwell was the teeny mouse?

Sam: Because she's a girl.

Maya: Actually Mitchell could totally play a fairy princess. He is a really good actor.

Olivia: Yea, Mitchell could totally play a girl and I could probably play a boy too.

Mitchell: Laughed.



*Figure 16.* The Fairy Princess and the Teeny Mouse

During a social studies unit, students created a living poster board about their selected person from the American Revolution. The posterboard included an accurate visual description of physical characteristics and period clothing details. Their research was to help the audience understand the famous person's importance during this time period. The teaching artist reviewed the steps of bringing a prop or character to life and helped the class with their initial rehearsals. The live interaction of sharing a report was engaging and had students excited to share their findings. Students felt confident with a

speech bubble to share their facts, but some stated they were not really good artists and were embarrassed by their drawing. Some students had memorized their speech, while others read from their speech bubble. It appeared the majority of the students were not nervous and were excited to interact with their peers by showing the work they had done. Notably, students tend to be more confident in their writing as a mode of communication in this classroom.

On the last day of small book groups, students wrote a letter to the teacher who worked with their small group, either me or Mrs. Pappas. Letter writing was a way of allowing students to present narrative interpretations through an exchange. Students were asked to write their book group teachers a letter to share written dialogue on their experiences, thoughts, and feelings with the selected texts within reading small groups. Figures 17 and 18 are the focal students' letters to me, their book group leader. As mentioned earlier, students requested book groups, and to see the request in their written voice was significant.

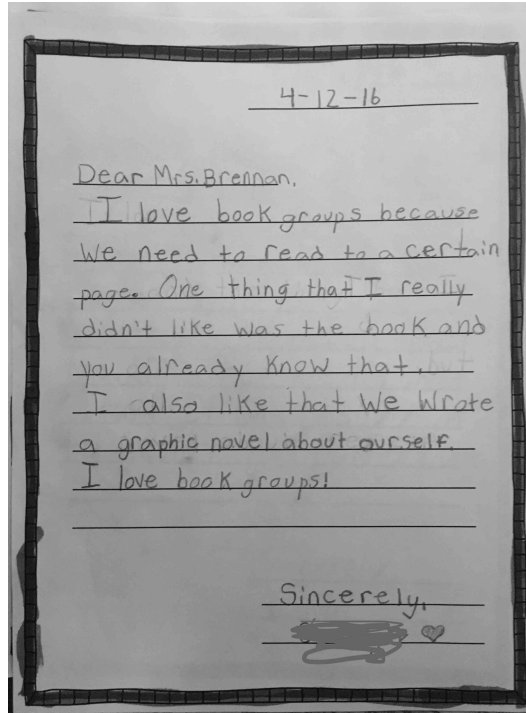


Figure 17. Izzy's Letter

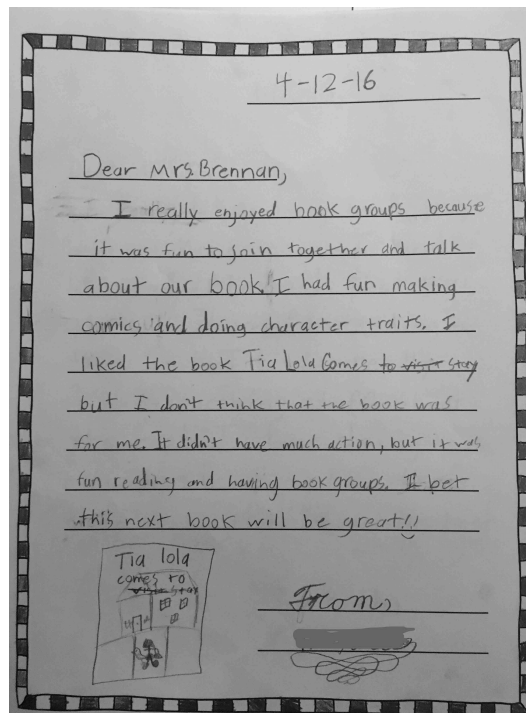


Figure 18. Mitchell's Letter

**Tentative manifestation #4: Readers.** During the small book groups, discussions about *being* readers happened frequently and naturally for all the students in the classroom. Conversations about books they liked to read and their experiences with the book group titles were quite engaging and occurred often.

Mitchell: What if when everyone is done with their book, we like switch books. Like they would read Tía Lola, we would read Alvin Ho, and they could read Song Lee.

Me: Why do you think we should do that?

Mitchell: Because then we would all have the experience, everyone would get the same experience with each book and you would get to read all the books.

Maya: Are we going to read another book for book group? Like after we are done reading this book can we read another book?

Me: Why do you like book groups?

Maya: I love reading. I like talking about reading with my friends. I like being in a book group like this. It is fun.

Mitchell: I like being in a small group and talking about books at the back table.

And we get to read books that we like to read and that are not too easy.

After reading the book *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi as a large group, students then met in small groups, and I discussed student names and how they felt about their names. During this small group time, the word identity was discussed. Students asked about identity because of Dr. Seuss's birthday and the idea of a pen name. The



connection the students made between the story and a previous discussion about identity and pen names was fascinating to me. Students were not sure they understood the word identity, so we brainstormed ideas on individual post-it notes. This was not originally part of the plan but was a purposeful addition. Students', not just the focal students, ideas are shown in Table 12. Students always loved when I brought post-it notes, pens, and markers for them to use rather than just their pencils! Students also completed a worksheet that allowed them to write about feelings they had about their name, what their nicknames were, and what they would change their name to if they could. My journal included some wonderings from this lived experience.

*Reading The Name Jar and discussing identity and names was quite interesting. It was a great way to assign pseudonyms for the study too. I wonder why the first connection students had to identity was secret. When I helped link prior knowledge by reminding them of their quilt square, students started listing cultural heritage such as Norwegian and German. I wish we had the quilt squares still hanging in the classroom for a visual. The majority of the students did not know the origin of their name or why they were named what they were. When I shared that I knew why I was named Melody, they asked if they could go home and ask their parents to come back and tell us! They really didn't like not knowing. From previous experiences, I know they will come back and remind me of the new "assignment" and be willing to share. Once again we are veering from the original plan and not completing parts of the reading pre-planned reading*

*journal. However, this addition has such a purposeful connection. Sometimes I think students should be apart of the lesson planning!*

*Something that has me really wondering is when Mitchell shared out loud he would change his name to Megan, but he would not write it down. When I asked him why he liked the name Megan, he said it is because it is “Megan”.*

*The worksheet caused quite a lot of dialogue and students have a tendency to share out loud rather than writing. These students are so chatty, on topic, but very chatty. I wonder if we don’t give enough time for student to student interaction and dialogue, or do we give it too much so that is what they are most comfortable with?*

*Another note: Mitchell was so happy to be using my pens in the classroom. As a matter of fact, he said, “I have these pens at my house, they are really nice!” So funny to me that they were so excited to write with felt tip pens and it was quite distracting! (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

Table 12  
*Identity Brainstorming Post-It Notes (Written in Student Text)*

Olivia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There name</li> <li>2. Where they were born</li> <li>3. There b-day</li> <li>4. Your features</li> <li>5. Licence plate</li> <li>6. Where they live</li> </ol>
Mitchell	Identity something secret about them
Maya	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Secret</li> <li>2) Birthday</li> <li>3) Nose</li> <li>4) Hair</li> </ol>

	5) Maridge (Marriage) 6) Name 7) Clothes 8) Reader 9) Gamer 10) Has a phone
Izzy	1. More about you. Shows who you are. 2. Secret/secret identity/something secret that know one else knows except the people you know 3. Pen names 4. Describes yourself
Cole	My name Secret Identity Birthday My hair My brain
Alisa	There birthday There face There name Relgener (Religion) Family
Chad	Dr. Suess-Theodor Lincoln-Ab P-Presley Tells your true self

During one of our many book group sessions, students shared how they felt about reading and book groups. It was encouraging hearing various perspectives and interpretations of the importance of book groups and reading. For example, Izzy shared that she thinks reading is one of the best ways to learn things in the classroom.

Me: What is the best way to learn things in your classroom?

Izzy: Um, most of the time it is reading. Because I like reading and I like reading true books, because sometimes they teach me what to do and what not to do. Like

I like mystery books, but I kind of like when someone gets hurts or stolen. I especially like when someone gets stolen.

Me: Really?

Izzy: Yea, I like those kinds of books because it makes me think much harder about how that person is feeling when they got stolen. I like thinking about how they must feel and what I would do if it were me.

Another moment captured was when Olivia and I were talking one-on-one after the book group regarding reading and how there is not a lot of time in the school day for reading. She then simply asked, "Can I tell you something?"

Olivia: Can I tell you something? I finished the book.

Me: You finished it?

Olivia: Yes.

Me: Tell me about the book.

Olivia: It was funny, at the end.

Me: Why do you feel that way?

Olivia: Because there were jokes.

Me: So now do you think you like the book a little better?

Olivia: Yes, sort of a yes and sort of a no.

Me: Tell me what that means.

Olivia: Well some parts were really boring when they were talking about stuff.

Some parts where really funny when they were making jokes.

Olivia: Can I tell you something?

Me: Yes.

Olivia: Whenever I read fast I tend to forget the story. And for Tía Lola I tried to read slow, but not too slow. But then I ended up having to read fast because I was behind. Sometimes if I think the book is boring, I read faster to just keep reading.

Me: Did you think Tía Lola was boring?

Olivia: Just a few parts. I just didn't like being behind.

This group of third graders often shared and discussed books openly with me. As I mentioned in my journal, many of these students read multiple books at a time, and books I think are based on their interest rather than their reading level. One day, Maya came to school with the book *Malala* by Malala Yousafzai. Maya and I did not have time to discuss the book, so I asked her if she would sit down and talk with me about it the next time I came to visit the classroom.

Maya: That is the book I read when I want to learn history.

Me: You read that book to learn about history? In school or out of school?

Maya: Out of school because of time.

Me: How many books are you reading right now?

Maya: Well, Tia Lola for book group, my library book, Malala for history, and a book I get from here (classroom library).

Me: You are reading 4 books? How do you do that?

Maya: My library books are books that don't take long to read so I can read them over the weekend.

Me: How do you keep 4 books straight?

Maya: It is easy. I have one for one day, another for another day so I can remember all of them.

Me: Who told you about Malala?

Maya: I found Malala at my sister's book fair, it looked interesting by the cover and then I read the back so I bought it.

Me: Are you interested in history? Or do you think you need to know more about history?

Maya: Yes! Both. I like reading true stories. I need to learn more though. For example, the Presidents, I only know that there are a lot of them named James and John. I don't even know their last names!

Me: Oh! Interesting.

Maya: Well I know Barack Obama and George W. Bush cause I have only lived with, well when I was a month old they elected Barack Obama so I have only basically lived with one president.

Students were given two to three post-it notes that had character traits written on them. We used keywords that could or could not be character traits of the main character in the text. Students had to provide evidence from the text to justify their thoughts. After this discussion about the main character and traits, students had to complete a bubble sheet that included their traits. With students asking about graphic novels, it was decided students would select one personal character trait and write a one-page graphic novel

story to provide evidence. All students were very excited to write a story in graphic novel format.

Me: What does it mean when I say character traits? What does it make you think of?

Cole: What they are like. Like strong and short, things like that.

Izzy: It means like, it describes like their feelings, their emotions, and all that kind of stuff.

It was a bit unexpected that students were so excited to write a story in graphic novel format about themselves. Students did not complain and really didn't ask any questions on how to write a graphic novel. Students received a template page and away they went! Izzy's graphic story is shared below in Figure 19. In my journal, I wrote quite often about the students' interest in graphic novels and action stories. One of my reflections included insight on adapting instruction to student interests.

*Students continually talk about liking to read graphic novels and action books! It was clear that students were excited we were listening to their interests and could incorporate interests with our current book group. As the teacher, it was quite helpful to be able to focus on character traits using a graphic novel personal narrative due to the misconception it seemed students had at first. Students were having a hard time deciphering between adjectives and traits. When I asked for them to use 3 adjectives to describe me they shared the following:*

*Funny: because you joke around a lot*

*Nice: because you don't boss us around*

*Happy: because you always smile and you laugh*

*It was interesting to note that without prompting, they provided evidence for the adjectives. These responses made me smile and really miss being in the classroom. However, I would assume my college students would list some of the same adjectives. At least I would hope so.*

*After talking about adjectives, we focused on character traits using book characters and then ourselves. Using text evidence to support the traits helped make connections as well. Students shared that sometimes they have to re-read to find text evidence and if they are not asked to provide evidence they sometimes read faster, but if they know they might have to provide evidence, they read slower. Another interesting piece that came out was “readers are writers.” Students shared if people didn’t write stories, we would not have books to read. I couldn’t agree more, I am trying to write their story! Students were so excited to share their stories and read aloud to their small group. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

Figure 19 is a graphic novel from Izzy that shows an example of how students brainstormed a list of traits that described themselves, selected one, and wrote a graphic novel to provide text evidence for the trait.



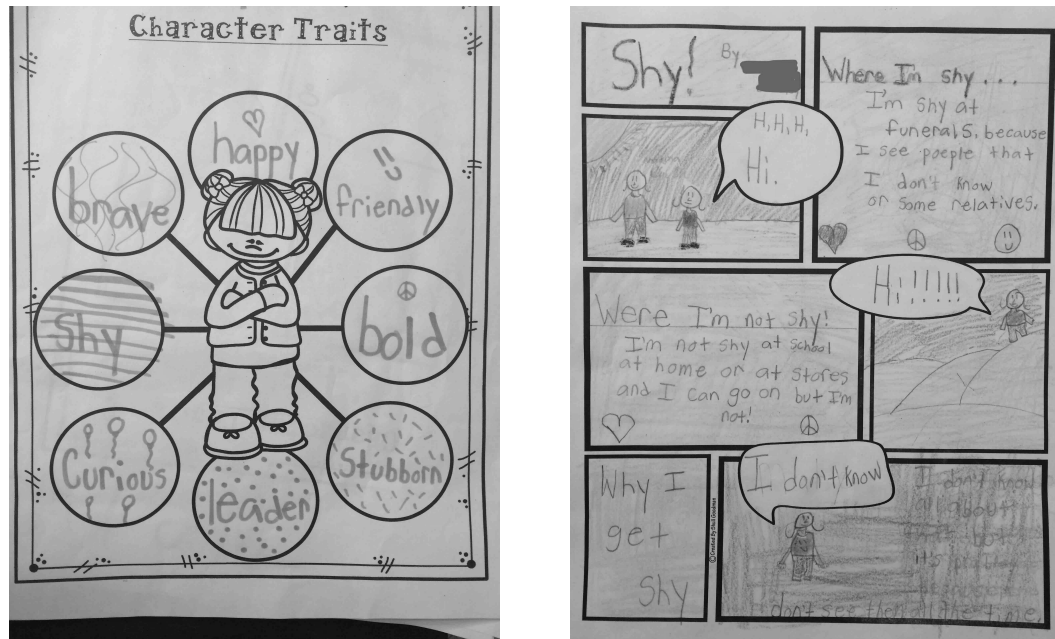


Figure 19. Izzy's Traits and Graphic Novel Story

Graphic Novel Story: Shy! By Izzy

(Speech bubble) H, H, H, Hi

When I'm shy....I'm shy at funerals because I see people that I don't know or some relatives.

Where I'm not shy! I'm not shy at school at home or at stores and I can go on but I'm not.

(Speech bubble) Hi!!!!!!

Why I get shy

(Speech bubble) I don't know

I don't know all about that but it's probably because I don't see them all the time.

**Tentative manifestation #5: Challenge.** What started as a simple question from a student, "How many things do we need to list?," became an effective discussion that continually occurred throughout my time in the classroom. Some students would ask

what the minimum requirements were, while others asked what the challenges would be. When an activity was opened, students could not just create their own expectations to complete the work; they needed guidance and set guidelines.

Me: When I say it's a challenge, what does that mean to you?

Cole: It's going to be harder.

Me: When I say it's a challenge does that mean you *have* to do it?

Izzy: It's not like you are saying you have to do it no matter what, but you should really do it.

Me: Do your parents ever say, "I challenge you to do this?"

All: Yes!

Mary: I think I should try to do it.

Izzy: Usually I don't do it at home. Because a lot of stuff seems disgusting, like if my dad wants me to pop a pimple or something I can't do it. But at school, I try to do it because it is educational usually.

Alisa: I hear I can do it when someone says they challenge me to something.

I asked Izzy if I could take a picture of her list. After I took the picture, she realized she had spelled a word incorrectly. She quickly fixed it and then asked me to take a new picture, which I did. However, she requested I delete the first picture and then I could have the new picture. I asked Izzy why she was so worried about spelling correctly. "Oh, I don't like spelling things wrong. I feel like people judge me when I spell things wrong, especially when it is easier words! I challenge myself to spell things correctly. It is just me."

After I took the second picture of Izzy's list, we talked a little more about the word, challenge. She kept saying how she really didn't like the word, but she likes to be challenged in school.

Me: You said you like to be challenged, but you don't like the word challenge?

Izzy: Well, at home, I just hate the word. Like challenge means go get the mail when I am perfectly lying down and watching t.v. And challenge sometimes means clean your room. I still need to do that challenge; I only have two more days.

Me: But you like challenge at school?

Izzy: Yeah, because it just, challenge just makes me feel like if you do it, it makes you a better person.

For our last day of the immigration-learning segment, we began by reading *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco aloud. I then asked students to tell their family story from the class quilt they individually made (Figure 3; page 77) to allow them to verbally share their story. Students who did not want to share could say "pass" and allow their classmates to view their quilt square and read it on their own. All but two students shared aloud, and it was quite powerful to hear their voice with their quilt square. Students were then *challenged* to pack a suitcase as if they were an immigrant who was getting ready to leave their home country and move to America with only one suitcase. Students searched for visual representations of items to put in the suitcase. It is important to note that this challenge also increased interaction and sharing between the students as they were trying to help each other find similar items or items they thought their peers would want to

include. Often I heard, “I found a brush, does anyone need a brush?” I also heard things like, “This is really cool, it is an awesome fishing pole, Michael, you would totally want a fishing pole, and you love to fish!”

During a math unit, students continued to share that measurement was challenging and they could not always remember the difference between gram and kilogram. Michael shared, “Sometimes I think kilo means small and so I get it wrong. I don’t know why I can’t remember. It is so hard for me and others always get the right answer.”

I decided to bring in a visual shown in Figure 21 that would help Michael and other students to make a connection to the terms gram and kilogram through a different mode. From spending time in this classroom, I realized most of the students needed to make connections for the content being taught to make sense. Also, students found success when the classroom teacher and I provided a visual they could refer back to on a daily basis.

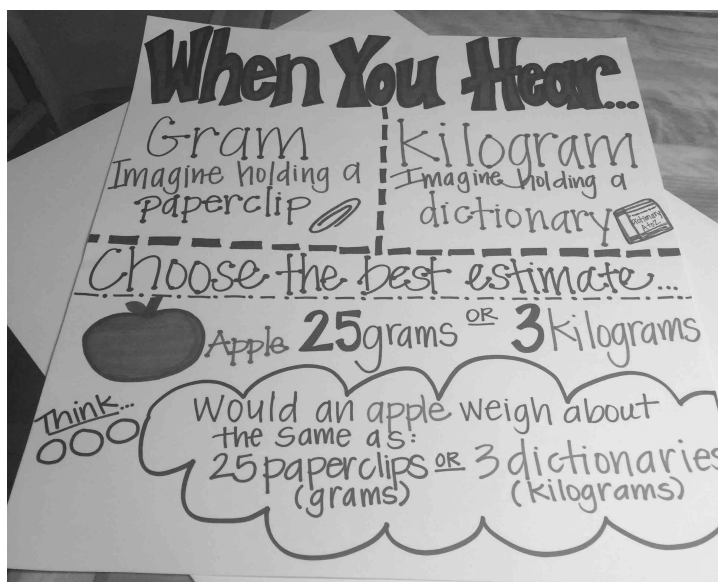


Figure 20. Math Module 2 Measurement Poster

In this chapter, chapter 4 I shared research component 4: Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner, through discussion of the narrative representation of five tentative manifestations I identified of the phenomenon, expression of social identities. I identified interests and abilities, belonging (fitting in), interaction, readers, and challenge as the five tentative manifestations. Interests and abilities highlighted focal participants ideas and responses of personal characteristics and how they described themselves. Belonging (fitting in) explored perception of self and others and if focal participants were a member of a group. Interaction was expressed through discussion, use of technology, and feelings. Focal participants self-identified as readers often and were very willing to discuss their thoughts, ideas, and feelings about being a reader. Challenge emerged when focal participants discussed feelings toward the idea and word, *challenge*. Perceptions and contributions were shared through student work, discussions, and small and large group interactions.

In the following chapter, Chapter 5, I spend more time with the data including the tentative manifestations I identified, and highlight various narrative artifacts to explore relationships between theory and experiences. To analyze the lived classroom experiences and student narratives, I used Jackson and Mazzei's book *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research* (2012) and followed a similar line of analysis as they did, where I *plugged in* theorists into the data I collected.

## Chapter 5: Thinking with Theory Data Analysis

*“Because we are different.”*

*Maya, age 8*

In chapter 5, I “transform the lived experience into a textual expression” to bring together the data, literature review, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and the philosophical conversation to open up the expressions of social identities shared in the classroom (Vagle, 2014, p. 136). In this chapter I analyze the five tentative manifestations I identified of the phenomenon, expressions of social identities, with a focus on intentionality. I have organized the text into four parts to think across multiple theorists and simultaneously work theory and data into one another. While Mazzei and Jackson (2012) showcase six major theorists, my analysis focused on four theorists; I chose to focus on Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Cook-Sather (2009), Kress (2009), and Gay (2010). I use the data I collected using narrative inquiry to think through the theories of culturally responsive teaching and multimodality. Next, I share limitations and future directions based on students’ experiences as well as my experience as the researcher. I follow with recommendations for future practice suggested from the data. I close this chapter with my concluding thoughts related to the experience of expressions of social identities within a third grade classroom. Although there are multiple ways to craft a post-intentional phenomenology text, I decided to think with theory after I had time with the tentative manifestations. Using narratives to think methodologically and philosophically with data allowed me to read the data and view how the phenomenon is opened up.

**Research Component #5: Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts**

For Research Component #5 in my post-intentional phenomenological study, I crafted a text in a way that was important to me as the researcher. Component #5 had two parts: re-stating the multiple and varied contexts, and brainstorming potential textual forms to craft a text of the identified tentative manifestations. During my study I used data collected through narrative inquiry to write philosophical conversations in my post-reflexion journal to engage the data with theories. I reflected on my data particularly when I thought the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices was prevalent.

**Re-State the Multiple and Varied Contexts**

Though much scholarship on culturally responsive teaching exists (e.g., Gay, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2007) there is still more work to be done that can showcase what effective instructional practices are being implemented in classrooms. Empirical evidence is lacking on how specific instructional practices support social identities in the classroom, particularly from student perspectives. I situated my study within the research literature on culturally responsive teaching, focusing on the ideas and strategies identified in the process of trying to become culturally responsive. Although originally theorized for racially marginalized populations and most often emphasized in middle and high school settings, I believe rural elementary education could greatly benefit from the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. Inequalities and social exclusion can also occur

in rural areas. Intersections of whiteness with social class, ethnicity, gender, and nationality in rural contexts remain largely unexplored areas of research in relation to culturally responsive teaching.

I wrote research questions to guide me in gathering descriptive data from students' perspectives and to help me articulate tentative manifestations I identified from the data. My intentions were to create a connection with third graders and to be conscious of their speaking, behavior, and lived classroom experiences. I was curious, not judgmental, and focused on what was working for students rather than on what was not working or what should be different. The phenomenon that came to the forefront of my study was expressions of social identities. The data also led me to glimpses of the phenomenon of intentionality. I found the phenomenon of intentionality when teachers took notice of students' social identities and included this information in their teaching practices.

Textual expression. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) wrote that when thinking with theory, it is important to focus on a specific concept from the work of theorists. With my data, I chose to focus on the theorists Clandinin and Connelly, Cook-Sather, Kress, and Gay. My research questions allowed me to select specific concepts from these theorists to plug into the data to see what tentative manifestations came to be. Digging into my data through narrative inquiry, student voice, multimodality, and culturally responsive teaching supported my post-intentional phenomenological thinking. The theorists and the identifiable concepts I selected from their research were "productive provocation" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Specific theorists and theoretical concepts opened up thoughts



and allowed me to extend my thinking through intentionality and the phenomenon of social identity, specifically in the classroom.

Jackson and Mazzei outlined three methodological requirements for engaging in thinking with theory:

1. Putting philosophical concepts to work while “disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they constitute or make one another,” (2012, p. 9).
2. “Allowing analytical questions that are used to think with to *emerge in the middle of plugging in*” (2012, p. 9). made possible by accessing specific theoretical concept(s); and
3. “Showing the *suppleness of both theory and data when plugged in*” by revising meaning to create new learning of theory with data ( 2012, p. 9).

Jackson and Mazzei in their book *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research* (2012) suggest researchers find themselves “in spaces which we no longer know how to describe” (Deleuze, 1998, p. xi). Following Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) methodological requirements for using thinking with theory, Table 13 shows the theorists I used, the specific concepts I called upon, and the questions aligned with each theoretical concept that *plugged in* to the data. The challenge to use traditional forms of qualitative data analysis while engaging in the analysis through “plugging in” the tentative manifestations rather than coding or listing themes supports post-intentional phenomenology methodology and the development of tentative manifestations. Working the theoretical concepts of student voice, narrative inquiry, culturally responsive teaching, and

multimodal practices into the data helped me identify multiple and varied perspectives of students' expressions of their social identities. These concepts with the data provided partial answers to my research questions:

1. How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom?
2. How do third graders' narratives express equity through multimodal learning in classrooms?
3. What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices?

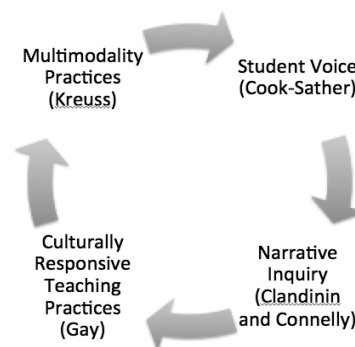
Table 13

*Summary of Applied Theorists, Concepts, and Research Questions Examined*

<b>Tentative Manifestation(s)</b>	<b>Theorist(s)</b>	<b>Specific Concept from the theorists</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interests and Abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook-Sather</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Voice</li> </ul>	How might expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging (Fitting in)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clandinin and Connelly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative Inquiry</li> </ul>	How do third graders' narratives express equity through culturally responsive teaching and multimodal learning in classrooms?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction</li> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Readers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gay</li> <li>• Kress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally Responsive Teaching</li> <li>• Multimodality</li> </ul>	What is the relationship between student expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching

			and multimodality practices?
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The conceptual framework for this study (Figure 21 below) is an attempt to help teachers think about how they can become more student-centered, transform their classrooms by using culturally responsive teaching practices through multimodal practices, and adapt their position in the classroom to view cultural practices as an asset rather than as a barrier. I asked myself, “What information is contained in the images?,” “What information is contained in the text?,” and “How does design support understanding and add to meaning?” In the following section I use four theorists to work with the data to document expressions of social identities that take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom. I utilize student voice and narrative inquiry while drawing attention to the relationship between those expressions of social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices. To conclude, I integrate a discussion of how students’ narratives express equity in the classroom and support a culturally responsive teaching stance for teachers.



*Figure 21.* Conceptual Framework

**Student voice.** Data was collected and shared through student voice (written and spoken text) and was the primary concept for my entire study. Cook-Sather (2006) described the value of student voice as a legitimate presence and active role within research, which I intended to support. As students shared their voices through discussions of work, they had opportunities to be involved and communicate various perspectives. A student's perspective is shaped by social and cultural factors (Delpit, 1988). Therefore, I provided the opportunity for students to share stories of culture, family, and background to help me learn about their ideas. By examining students' voices, I was able to think of new ways to teach in a culturally responsive approach. Cook-Sather (2009) stated,

Students, like anyone else, just want to be heard and validated. When they experience this validation (especially from teachers), I find they are more proactive about their learning. If someone can make them feel important, then they can feel good about themselves and their own learning...at least that's what I have seen in my classroom! (p. 176)

Student voice took shape through many forms in my study (e.g., self-expression, writing, discussion, opinion, and choice). The opportunity to share in discussion with students supported their perspectives regarding instructional practices that teachers maintain through a culturally responsive stance in the classroom. The majority of data I gathered featured students sharing their voices and is shared throughout the five tentative manifestations. I then had to think through theory to narrate the relationship between student expressions of their social identities around culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices.

I identified tentative manifestation #1 as abilities and interests as students showed ease in responding to questions and activities with personal information about their talents and hobbies. Based on my experiences in various classrooms, students are not given enough time to share about their abilities and interests in and out of school. A goal writing activity, as referred to in Table 11 (page 95) highlighted student goals that were written by the five focal students. All students were asked to consider goals regarding how to help others and something they would like to learn more about. The majority of the students in the classroom, especially focal students, talked about wanting to be kind, nice, and to include others. Most students wanted to learn more about animals, while Maya wanted to learn more about countries. I assume many classroom teachers and students discuss goals, often write them down, and display the goals as reminders. However, teachers and students need to move beyond sharing the goals and have an opportunity to meet their goals. Students in this third grade classroom shared their interests, which provided a resource to support instructional practices for diverse learners. For example, instructional practices could include writing activities, cross-language connections with similarities and differences, and connections to home and community through storytelling and personal narratives. To support culturally responsive teaching, teachers need to allow students' experiences and backgrounds to guide the curriculum. With the information students shared through their goal writing, it was obvious the focal students wanted to learn more about specific animals and countries. English common core language arts standards require third graders to write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly (CCSS.ELA-

Literacy.W.3.2). Students are also required to conduct short research projects to build knowledge about a topic (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7). Students could complete a grade level writing standard through interactive writing using the iPads; participate in collaborative writing, independent writing, or guided writing depending on their needs, interest, and abilities; all while completing a goal they set for themselves.

Another activity that allowed students to share their expressions of abilities and interests was the identity discussion (Figure 6 on page 98) wherein students performed a brainstorming session around the term identity and provided text evidence from *How Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay* (2002). Students were asked to “Think about character identity,” as well as “How does character identity matter to the story?,” and “What else do we know about the character? Why might that matter?” The purpose of this activity was to “tap in to some of the possible messages or lessons in the story” while making personal connections to the story and characters (Serravallo, 2015, p. 215). It was important to notice the category ability had the most connections, the category of ethnicity allowed students to share their personal backgrounds, while socio-economic status and religion were the least represented categories. Students were more concerned about abilities and interests, what they liked to do, and how those traits helped them fit in with their peers. Students in this third grade classroom were least concerned with the differences in socio-economic status, ethnicity, and religion. I believe that would be accurate in most rural third grade classrooms. Students want to share in similarities to feel a sense of belonging. However, they are accepting of differences and enjoyed sharing similarities and differences.

*“Oh, like I am Mexican?” said Maya and then the group understood the term Ethnicity. Maya decided to write Spanish because she speaks Spanish, rather than write Mexican. English, German, French, Norwegian, and Welch were included in the discussion. It was interesting to me that race was not written or discussed throughout this entire discussion. (Researcher Post-Reflexion Journal)*

**Narrative inquiry.** Although narrative inquiry is most often used as a methodology, I intended to use it in my study to honor the understanding of the lived experience as a source of data collection. Collaboration between the students in the third grade classroom and myself as a co-teacher and researcher created social interaction that became a story. As Connelly (2013) stated, narrative inquiry “is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experience are expressed” (p. 18). As Connelly and Clandinin (2000) noted, the phrase "experiencing the experience" is a reminder that narrative inquiry is aimed at understanding and making meaning of experience (p. 2). Often times, narrative and storytelling are used interchangeably within the qualitative research method (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995, 1996, 2000).

Clandinin (2008) shared, “narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new” as it’s purpose is to document how human beings live and tell stories in relation to their lived experiences (p. 44). Connelly and Clandinin (1995, 1996) and Clandinin (1985, 2008) described narrative inquiry as a method and a phenomenon to study classrooms through narrative accounts to describe a variety of educational experiences. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) pointed out,

It is equally correct to say “inquiry into narrative” as it is “narrative inquiry.” By this we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the pattern of inquiry of its study... Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 2)

Narrative inquiry allowed for participants and the reader to make meaning from the experience, while phenomenologists find themselves in the experience and explore the narratives as data. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted, “People live stories, and in them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones... stories... educate the self and others, including the young and those, such as researchers, who are new to their communities” (p. xxvi). Connelly (2013) shared, “The stories lived and told in a narrative inquiry relationship are always a co-composition, an intentional co-composition. The stories are co-composed in the spaces between us as inquirers and participants” (p. 24). Narrative inquiry storytelling is a complement of phenomenology as both are used for gathering stories, narratives, and anecdotes from individuals.

I identified tentative manifestation #2 as belonging and fitting in. This idea was voiced from all focal students, most often during storytelling. Maya shared she has a stepbrother who will be moving and joining her family in the summer from El Salvador. She was concerned he might not feel comfortable in the U.S., especially with the English language: “I need to learn more Spanish so I can help him feel comfortable and fit in



here. I keep working on it and I am glad our book has Spanish in it to help me” (Maya, personal interaction). What a powerful statement, and I wondered if she would express the same concern if a new student moved into the classroom who spoke another language?

In “All About Me” books, focal students shared information about their family while trying to fit in with peers, especially when their family dynamics are different from others. In Figures 7-9 on pages, students shared their family dynamics through visual interpretation. Guided and independent writing is a strategy identified to support instructional practices of diverse classrooms. The “All About Me” book pages were an example of guided and independent writing as students were directed to include a “family” page to help readers learn who made up their family. Independent writing was displayed through focal students’ interpretation of how to represent their family. Maya chose two separate pages for her two families in different homes; Olivia wrote on one page, and did not showcase that her parents were divorced and lived in two different homes. Michael divided his one page to visualize his divided family. Three students, three separated families, three different visual representations showcased family patterns and provided the opportunity to talk and write about similarities and differences that reflected their varied aspects of family culture.

Figure 12 on page 112 provides a visual image of the brainstorming that was completed as a whole group in the classroom about family. Students mentioned much of what was shared about their classroom were also some things needed to fit in with their classmates. Izzy shared, “Hey, some of the things we said is things we have to do in our

classroom too. It is like our classroom is our family. We have to help others and play games to fit in, otherwise, people don't like you." (Izzy, Personal interaction)

Classrooms that have teachers who are practicing culturally responsive pedagogy create communities among individuals from different cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds. I believe students can sense when their classrooms support them and when trust is present. To support connections to home and community, students completed a quilt square that became a classroom story quilt shown in Figure 3 on page 77. To keep the storytelling visual, it would have been beneficial to keep the classroom story quilt hanging up year round and be able to refer to the similarities, differences, and the family connections when appropriate.

**Culturally responsive teaching practices.** Ladson-Billings (1994) stated that culture is central to learning, plays a role in communicating and receiving information, and shapes the thinking process of groups and individuals. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that acknowledges the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for students" (p. 31). Gay (2010) stated that to be culturally responsive, educators "need to create caring learning communities where culturally different individuals are valued; using cultural knowledge of families, communities, and heritages to guide curriculum, classroom climate, instructional strategies, and relationships with students" (p. 31). Gay set her emphasis on race, culture, and ethnicity to work for

marginalized, underachieving students of color. Various scholars have focused on gender, sexual orientation, social class, or linguistic diversity contexts to engage in principles of culturally responsive teaching. For my study, I committed to a rural classroom and aimed to uncover the contexts that made this particular classroom diverse.

Despite the differences in defining cultural pedagogy, scholars share common assumptions to support culturally and linguistically diverse students in the classroom. Students' cultural heritage needs to be respected, celebrated, and included in the classroom curriculum (Gay, 2002). Linking students' experiences at home and at school encourages classroom interactions that support topics relevant to students while maintaining home language and culture (Nieto, 2013).

After talking with several teachers in Wisconsin, I learned that an effort to improve student achievement through culturally responsive practices is expected but not completely understood. I grappled with the idea of using the conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings) or culturally responsive teaching (Gay) for this study. Culturally relevant pedagogy refers to the choice of curricular materials that focus on cultural background. Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges or affirms different cultural backgrounds. Following the review of literature, I selected culturally responsive teaching because of the ability to learn from and relate to people of your own culture as well as from other cultures (Gay, 2000).

I identified tentative manifestation #3 as interaction as students expressed some aspects of their social identities in the contexts of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In my study there was a balance of interaction between teacher-to-student as

well as student-to-student. Text sets and bilingual books were used as strategies to support instructional practices for diverse learners. In this particular classroom there were students whose home language was Spanish, and yet they did not read or write in their native language fluently. Therefore, a text that integrated some Spanish made the most sense. Through book groups, students were able to discuss the importance of language, compare and contrast their family with the family in *Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay (2002)*, and build a positive self-concept through literature. When I asked Maya if she would help us pronounce Spanish words correctly and help us with the meanings, her response was so powerful: “Yes! This is the first book I have read in school with Spanish in it. No one has had me do that in school! I have never read a book with Spanish words in it in school or helped people in school learn Spanish” (Maya, personal interaction).

According to Gay (2010), one of the most practical culturally responsive teaching strategies a teacher can include is to build a multicultural library that includes books featuring characters that look similar to students in the classroom and read literature by authors from diverse cultures. During social studies classes and the immigration unit, the students and I discussed interaction through a few contexts. For example, we role-played using wordless pictures of immigrants, objects from Italian culture used as teaching tools, and my personal narrative from my great-grandmother’s emigration story were shared through oral discourse. Students were engaged when I performed an immigrant role-play storytelling from a suitcase with Melanie, a teaching artist. Our goal was to model instructional practices that involve oral language, cross-language connections, and connections to home and community to share a historical perspective about interaction

and immigration. I shared a family story of my great-grandmother who emigrated from Italy using pictures and artifacts such as a door charm, wooden spoon and apron, Pinocchio wooden doll, and a crucifix. Students made personal connections and wanted to share about their own culture and family. I believe there was a missed opportunity, due to lack of time, of having students research and write about different aspects of their culture and/or traditions shared by their families. This writing could have supported deeper engagement in oral language, cross-language connections, and connections to home and community. However, it is important to note the quilt project (Figure 3 on page 77) did allow for students to share about their own culture and family.

I labeled tentative manifestation #5 by thinking in terms of minimum requirements, guidance, set guidelines, and expectations. Students wanted reassurance they were meeting the expectations set forth by the teacher. Students shared that when they were challenged at home or in sports, they felt differently than when they were challenged academically in school.

Some students would always ask what the minimum requirements for an assignment were, while others asked what the challenge would be. When I asked students how they felt about the idea of challenge, there were mixed responses, especially related to academics. For example, Izzy shared, “Challenge just makes me feel like if you do it, it makes you a better person. Oh, like I don’t like spelling things wrong. I feel like people judge me when I spell things wrong, especially when it is easier words! I challenge myself to spell things correctly. It is just me” (Izzy, personal interaction).

Manipulatives can support learners through hands-on learning with objects that create connections between content and experiences. During a math unit on measurement and weight, I realized that most of the students needed to make personal connections for the content being taught to make sense. Figure 21 on page 144 is an example of how a visual helps the content to make sense. Some students could not remember the difference between gram and kilogram; therefore, a visual reference helped students make a connection to internalize these abstract concepts. Students were familiar with paperclips and a dictionary; therefore, we were able to compare other items to those measurements. It should be noted students continued to refer to the visual throughout the module. I learned, after I made the poster, that one of the students in the class was very artistic and really liked to draw. Next time, I plan to inquire with students to see if they would like to help make a poster for the classroom. This would support multimodal learning while also being culturally responsive to students' backgrounds and interests.

**Multimodality practices.** Multimodality represents the many different modes people use to communicate with each other and to express themselves. Multimodal practices are relevant to address as there has been an increase in technology, and multimedia tools have led people to more easily use many modes in art, writing, and everyday interactions. Kress (2009) explained that mode is generally defined as a communication channel that a culture recognizes. Examples are writing, posture, images, and interaction between people. Theorists who advocate for multimodality emphasize that people communicate in a variety of ways, and in order to completely understand someone, many modes must be observed and recognized (Bezemer and Kress, 2008;

Kress, 2009). Some modes of communication students experienced in this classroom were visual representations, technology with iPads and Chromebooks, and working in small groups.

I identified tentative manifestation #4 as readers using the data students shared with how they felt about reading groups and how often they read. During much of my time in the classroom, students discussed *being* readers, what that meant, what types of genres they preferred, and their positive and negative experiences with reading. I was encouraged when I heard various perspectives and interpretations of the importance of book groups and reading.

To include the instructional practice of storytelling and bilingual books, I read *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2003) to the whole class. It was limited in bilingual text but was a starting point and introduced an author and story from a culture (Korean) not present in this particular classroom. However, it should be noted one of the third grade classrooms in the building had a student whose family had emigrated from Korea. This third grade class of students really enjoyed talking to each other, sometimes on task topics and other times off task. Even when students were given a worksheet that required writing a response, it seemed they needed to speak their response out loud before writing it down. In small groups, I discussed student names and how that can be part of identity. For our discussion on the book *The Name Jar* and identity, I wanted students to share their individual brainstorming through writing. From a previous experience, I knew students really enjoyed writing with pens or markers and on post-it notes, so I tried that

mode again. Some of the most powerful statements students wrote when I asked them what the word *identity* meant to them are found in Table 12 on page 125.

The story, *The Name Jar*, shared how the main character, Unhei, was named and the meaning of her name. Students wanted to connect with that part of the text and go home to learn how they were named. This task was not part of the original lesson plan and yet was a springboard for students to apply connections from a text to their own identity. A key take-away for me from this activity was that students can and should be a part of the planning and should share artifacts and stories from home that may reflect their culture. In my post-reflexive journal, I captured a consideration for future direction:

*Once again we are veering from the original plan and not completing parts of the reading pre-planned reading journal. However, this addition has such a purposeful connection. Sometimes I think students should be apart of the lesson planning!* (Researcher Post-Reflexive Journal)

Independent writing and author's chair are instructional practices that are multimodal and can be helpful for a variety of students. Throughout the time in small book groups, students shared their interest in action and graphic novel genres. I was encouraged to hear students state readers are writers and be excited to share a personal story through the graphic novel format. Learning within the context of culture and listening to student interest encouraged an additional task to the original reading journal for book groups.

*Students continually talk about liking to read graphic novels and action books! It was clear that students were excited that we (Mrs. Pappas and I) were listening to*







*their interests and could incorporate that with our current book group. As the teacher, it was quite helpful to be able to focus on character traits using a graphic novel personal narrative due to the misconception it seemed students had at first.*

(Researcher Post-Reflexive Journal)

Interaction, which I identified as tentative manifestation #3, occurred with peers and teachers. Students also discussed interaction with technology such as iPads and video games, and with books. Based on how many students shared their gamer personas, love of iPad interaction, and desire to play games, it seemed essential to more intentionally use technology with these students. One thing I have noticed with iPads in the classroom is that sometimes they are used for free choice, and time using technology is not always integrated with the current curriculum. I believe there are missed educational opportunities if classrooms are using technology just to use technology. Based on my time in class, a few cross-curricular apps I would use on a regular basis in the classroom in the future are the following free apps found in Table 14 below.

Table 14  
*Cross-curricular apps*

App Name	Citation	App Description
Nearpod 	Nearpod, LLC. (2016). Nearpod (8.5) [iOS 8.0 or later] Retrieved from <a href="https://nearpod.com/">https://nearpod.com/</a>	Combines interactive presentations, collaboration, and real time assessment tools into one integrated app.
Seesaw 	Seesaw Learning, Inc. (2016). Seesaw (3.2.1) [iOS 8.0 or later] Retrieved from <a href="http://web.seesaw.me/">http://web.seesaw.me/</a>	Student-driven digital portfolio that empowers students of all ages to independently document and share what they are learning at school.

<p>QR Scan App</p> 	<p>ShopSavvy, Inc. (2016). QR Code Reader and Scanner (3.3.5.0) [Requires iOS 7.0 or later] Retrieved from <a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/qr-code-reader-and-scanner/id388175979?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/qr-code-reader-and-scanner/id388175979?mt=8</a></p>	<p>Using QR codes students can use the app to “scan” code and be redirected to a site, image, or a link.</p>
<p>Chatterpix Kids</p> 	<p>Duck Duck Moose, Inc. (2015). Chatterpix Kids (1.2) [Requires iOS 6.0 or later] Retrieved from <a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chatterpix-kids-by-duck-duck/id734046126?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chatterpix-kids-by-duck-duck/id734046126?mt=8</a></p>	<p>Make anything talk! Animals, people, drawings, etc. come to life. With so many students asking to learn more about animals, and hearing one student say that it is easier to play the role of an animal since everyone like animals, this is an interactive app that students will be excited to use.</p>

Multimodality also encompasses the environment. For the last small book group time, I took students outside with Mrs. Pappas. Students had inquired about going outside, and I told them we could go out for one of the last book group meeting times. To build a sense of community and trust, I knew I needed to follow through and provide that mode of learning to these students. Figure 15 on page 119 showed interaction between students and their blending of book groups, as well as their separation of gender. The discourse between students sharing favorite parts of their book was not anticipated, and yet students were engaged in thinking about reading one of the other books read by their peers. I assume most teachers take their students outside to play, which is needed. I think it is equally important to take the classroom and learning outside. Opportunities such as read to self, exploratory walks, and completing writing activities on clipboards outside

change the environmental perspective, and the modality of learning is also transformed.

Altering the environment transforms how we communicate and express ourselves.

With a lack of similarity between instruction and cultural identities of students, there can be resistance from the student in regards to instruction, the teacher, and the school (Au, 1986). I have found when planning, instruction, and assessment are intentional to students in the classroom; culturally responsive teaching and multimodal learning are supported, which increases a sense of equity. Today's standardized curriculum and standards are the high expectations in the classroom. Teachers need to continue to support students and offer opportunities for students to meet the high academic demands put on them. I know when students know their teachers believe in them, a relationship is built, and trust is formed. However, to maintain relationships, all members in the classroom, especially teachers, need to really listen to student voice and act on what is being said. Gay (2013) suggested that the "most powerful evidence of teaching effectiveness is the personal story" (p. xxii). Therefore, I have determined to emphasize that providing opportunities, instructional practices, and dialogue supportive of diverse students should continue to be a researchable area within education.

Expressions of social identities were supported when Mrs. Pappas and I provided opportunities to practice multimodal meaning while being engaged in culturally responsive strategies. Mindful planning encouraged and enhanced multimodal activities that supported the social identities of students, while promoting culturally responsive connections. In my study, culturally responsive teaching needed to move away from strategies used in the classroom and into a position that took into account students' needs

in relation to learning through intentional planning, instruction, and assessment. I believe culturally responsive teaching and multimodal practices are interrelated and co-exist in the classroom. Teachers are doing some of each practice and need to give themselves credit for all they are doing for students in the classroom. I do think more intention to instructional practices that guide interaction and a sense of belonging in the classroom will benefit all students as members of the classroom community.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

My study took a closer look at student voice, expressions of social identities, and students' lived classroom experiences, which I believe will lead educators to a culturally responsive stance. Every year, an understanding of the students who make up the classroom community needs to be collected and become part of planning, instruction, and assessment. When culturally responsive teaching and multimodal practices are exhibited, classrooms develop a caring, learning community that engages a variety of learners while honoring students' learning styles, lived experiences, and backgrounds (Jones-Walker, 2015.) Educators need to be aware of a variety of methods and techniques, as well as students' identities, to best meet their needs each year in classrooms. I was able to gain a better understanding of students' perspectives on learning in their classrooms from observations, conversations, student's narratives, and co-teaching. Students taught me to be curious, to ask questions, and to listen more than I spoke. Student expressions of social identities taught me five things I think all classroom teachers can and should maintain to ensure they are enacting a culturally responsive teaching stance. These opportunities are shared in Table 15.

Table 15  
*Strategies to Maintain a Culturally Responsive Teaching Stance*

Theory/Theorists	Instructional Practice to Maintain Culturally Responsive Stance	Data Support through Student Voice
Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010)	<b>Multicultural library.</b> A classroom teacher should maintain a multicultural library and include books that feature characters that look similar to students, but also introduce students to others who are different from them. Teachers should also read literature by authors of other cultures to students.	“Yes! This is the first book I have read in school with Spanish in it” (Maya, Personal Interaction).
Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010)	<b>Share.</b> Provide opportunities for students to share artifacts that reflect their culture, experiences, and beliefs.	“This is from art class, do you like it? It is one of my favorite things I have made. Which one is the boy and which one is the girl? Can you tell which is the boy and which is the girl?” (Olivia, Personal Interaction)
Multimodal (Kress, 2009)	<b>Collaborate.</b> Collaborate teacher to student and student to student. Engage students in guiding curriculum and lessons through student-centered instruction that is intentional and includes students’ interests, customs, traditions, experiences, and perspectives.	“Math is easy to read because it is numbers. Math looks the same for people. Everyone can read numbers and we can work together to answer questions. And we get to play games to learn math that is fun. And we get to be in small groups that go to math stations” (Michael, Personal Interaction).
Multimodality (Kress, 2009)	<b>Practice multimodality.</b> Select music, games, drama, and art that represent cultures of the students in the school and community (not just	“Don’t judge a book by its cover. Kind of saying like, the opposite...ok, it’s don’t judge a person

	the classroom) to be shared throughout the day, not just special occasions or certain months.	by the outside. It means people can be anything they want when they feel good about how people are treating them” (Mitchell, Personal Interaction).
Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010)	<b>Inquire.</b> Be curious and pursue an inquiry stance in your classroom and with your teaching. Ask questions. Reflect on your biases, assumptions, and beliefs. Learn from your students, their families, and your community.	“Challenge just makes me feel like if you do it, it makes you a better person” (Izzy, Personal Interaction).

### Limitations

As with any research, the findings from my study take life and are limited by the research design and its implementation. I have documented the lived classroom experiences and expressions of social identities of third graders through language, stories, and other artistic creations. I provided detailed description of the data; however, it was a sampling of the data that was collected over 12 weeks- a relatively short period of time. I studied one third grade classroom and five focal students in a rural school district. Nonetheless, I had meaningful connections and relationships with the students and Mrs. Pappas.

My participant selection was a potential limitation. I was working with three third grade teachers, and as a team we decided I would be in Mrs. Pappas’ classroom as she did not have a student teacher and the two other third grade teachers did. Unfortunately, Mrs. Pappas took a family medical leave and had a long-term substitute in her classroom in the fall after starting the school year and establishing classroom routines. Data

collection did not take place while the long-term substitute was in the classroom.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that having two teachers in one school year could have affected this classroom community.

Another limitation of this study was that I did not survey teachers to gain an understanding of their beliefs, assumptions, and biases regarding culturally responsive and multimodal teaching practices. Therefore, I would consider surveying classroom teachers about their perception and perspectives on culturally responsive teaching and multimodal practices as a future direction to help guide instructional practice selection.

### **Future Directions**

With this study, I set out to understand how expressions of social identities take shape through language, stories, and other artistic creations in a third grade classroom. I found that acknowledging social identities encourages teachers to practice culturally responsive teaching and use multimodal strategies. Culturally responsive teaching does not necessarily have to be based on race or only be targeted for marginalized students. Instead, I believe what makes an instructional practice culturally responsive is mirroring students' social identities regularly as part of a routine, with intentionality and consistency.

My study also set out to find what relationship exists between student expressions of their social identities within culturally responsive teaching and multimodality practices. I found collaborative planning and co-teaching provided professional development to improve culturally responsive teaching practices while also including multimodal learning opportunities.

Post-intentional phenomenology is not about findings but rather about tentative manifestations. Nonetheless, I have highlighted several promising practices that could support classroom instruction and the needs of students in diverse classrooms. These findings are relevant to educators and researchers as they consider how to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. My implications must be viewed carefully as they are context-dependent, yet they do provide constructive insights from students' perspectives. Future directions with instructional practices that were not used in this study but should be considered in classroom settings are:

- 1) Traditional songs, chants, rhymes in students' home language or other languages spoken within the community
- 2) Shared reading with patterned language books
- 3) More bilingual books, not just home language specific
- 4) Books created in home languages or other languages

As I think about my time in the classroom and the lessons third graders taught me, I look forward to continuing this research in more classrooms. Expressions of social identities and the narratives the students shared influenced my understanding of equity through culturally responsive teaching and multimodal learning in classrooms. Although I did not foreground an analysis of gendered assumptions, there are spaces in the data to examine gender identity. This is an area that I would like to focus on in future classrooms. An example of this was when Mitchell said he would like to have the name Megan and then backed off quickly. One way to interpret Mitchell's comment may be that he is questioning the idea of gender. I would like to spend time in thoughtful



consideration of how gender is at play in classroom spaces such as this one. Mitchell seemed to have a desire to be called something different, but he wrestled with gender identity. Wondering about gender bending and Mitchell's narrative has me thinking about gender theorizing in an elementary context. Mitchell's peers did not have any reaction to his desire, even before he self-corrected himself saying Megan is too much of a girl's name.

While analyzing data, I found that gender identity and rural identities presented themselves as areas to examine more in depth, but I did not have enough evidence to analyze them during this study.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Social identities have a significant influence on how one perceives others, one's self-esteem, self-confidence, aspirations, motivation, and effort expended in various aspects of one's life (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). According to Murrell (2009), identity may be influenced by individuals' personal beliefs, reactions to, and impressions of others. Students essentially need to be recognized by others while experiencing feelings of being included and supported, regardless of similarities and differences. Murrell (2009) emphasized that school environments can assist with the growth of social identities in three categories: actions students make, decisions students make, and how others respond to students as a result. Seidl (2007) suggested the "just like me" mentality makes it challenging for White teachers to consider how relevant teaching for other cultures takes shape. It is critical for educators to recognize everyone has a cultural identity, and understanding our own cultural identity will allow recognition

of the lenses through which we see other people, including students (Schmidt, 1999). Teachers can give value to a student's cultural identity by keeping the student's life integrated in the curriculum frequently, not superficially. The most responsive way to accomplish frequent integration is to understand students' lives outside of school, avoiding a prejudiced standpoint (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Milner (2008) affirmed all students benefit by honoring and building on their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds, which can in turn make learning more meaningful while supporting their identity development.

Educational leaders and educators would do well to heed the words of third grade student Maya when she reflected on the quote from the book *How Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay*: "You have to love people for who they are; then they will become all they can be" (Alvarez, 2015, p. 25).

You don't have to like them, but love them. Like you have to love people and they will do all they can do to be good, happy, and who they are. You know, like we are all different but that is cool and we should be glad. But sometimes we try to be like other people because we think that would be cool.

Maya, age 8

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## Appendix A

### Child Assent Form

I will be working with your teacher and will help to teach lessons in your classroom. I am asking if you are willing to talk with me about your experiences in the classroom.

I am hoping to find out about how children at your school are learning and how they feel about school and learning. I will be talking with you about your thoughts and feelings as you do some reading, writing and projects at school. Our time together will be audio recorded.

You can ask questions about this study. If you have a question later that you don't think of now, you can ask next time.

Sign here if you will be in the study. If you don't want to be in this study, don't sign. Remember, being in this study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this, or even if you change your mind later.

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Parent Consent Form

Melody Brennan, a Ph.D. candidate, at the University of Minnesota, (and Early Childhood Education faculty member at UW-Stout) would like your child to be part of her dissertation research study on how children express themselves through language, stories, and other artistic creations. Marathon Area School District and Kenwood Elementary have approved her research in October 2015. Your decision *will NOT* affect your child within the school or University of Minnesota.

Mrs. Brennan will be collaboratively planning and teaching with the classroom teacher. The study will help learn about how third graders express themselves through stories, language, and artistic creations while participating in instructional and classroom experiences. This will help teachers learn how children feel about themselves and school.

Mrs. Brennan will be visiting the classroom weekly for 8 weeks. If parents give permission, their children will be engaged in weekly discussion with Melody in their classroom while they are participating in daily learning activities. Mrs. Brennan will mostly be working with students during reading and social studies. They will be asked about their experiences and feelings in the classroom, and their responses will be documented through audio recording. The purpose is to learn from students' perspectives. Please keep in mind your child *will NOT* be taken out of class and their names *will NOT* be used when discussing the research. If you have questions or want to know more about the study, please contact Melody Brennan at 715-123-4567 or Principal Mrs. Diane Karjala at (715-123-4567)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; [\(612\) 625-1650](tel:6126251650).

Thank you,

Melody Brennan  
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**PLEASE SIGN OTHER SIDE**

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Dear Parents of \_\_\_\_\_,

If you will allow your child to participate in discussions and documentation of responses with Melody Brennan to support the expressions of social identities study, please check **X** Yes below, sign and date this form and return it to your child's teacher.

**I understand based on what I have learned from this consent form, that my decision will not affect my child within (Kenwood Elementary/Marathon Area School District) and the University of Minnesota. I also understand that if I choose to allow my child to participate I may withdraw my permission at any time. I recognize that my child will be given a pseudonym and his/her identity will not be shared at any time throughout the study or in written form of the dissertation.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES. I give permission for my child to participate in the research study.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **NO. I do not give permission for my child to participate in the research study.**

**Students name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian's name** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Potential Guiding Conversation/Interview Questions

- Describe your strengths, interests, and abilities
- Tell me about stories you have read or heard that have taught you about others
- Tell me about who you are and what makes you unique/special
- Tell me about a time you realized you were unique/different/special
  - What characteristics make you different from your siblings and peers?
  - Tell me more about yourself

## Appendix D

# Family Project

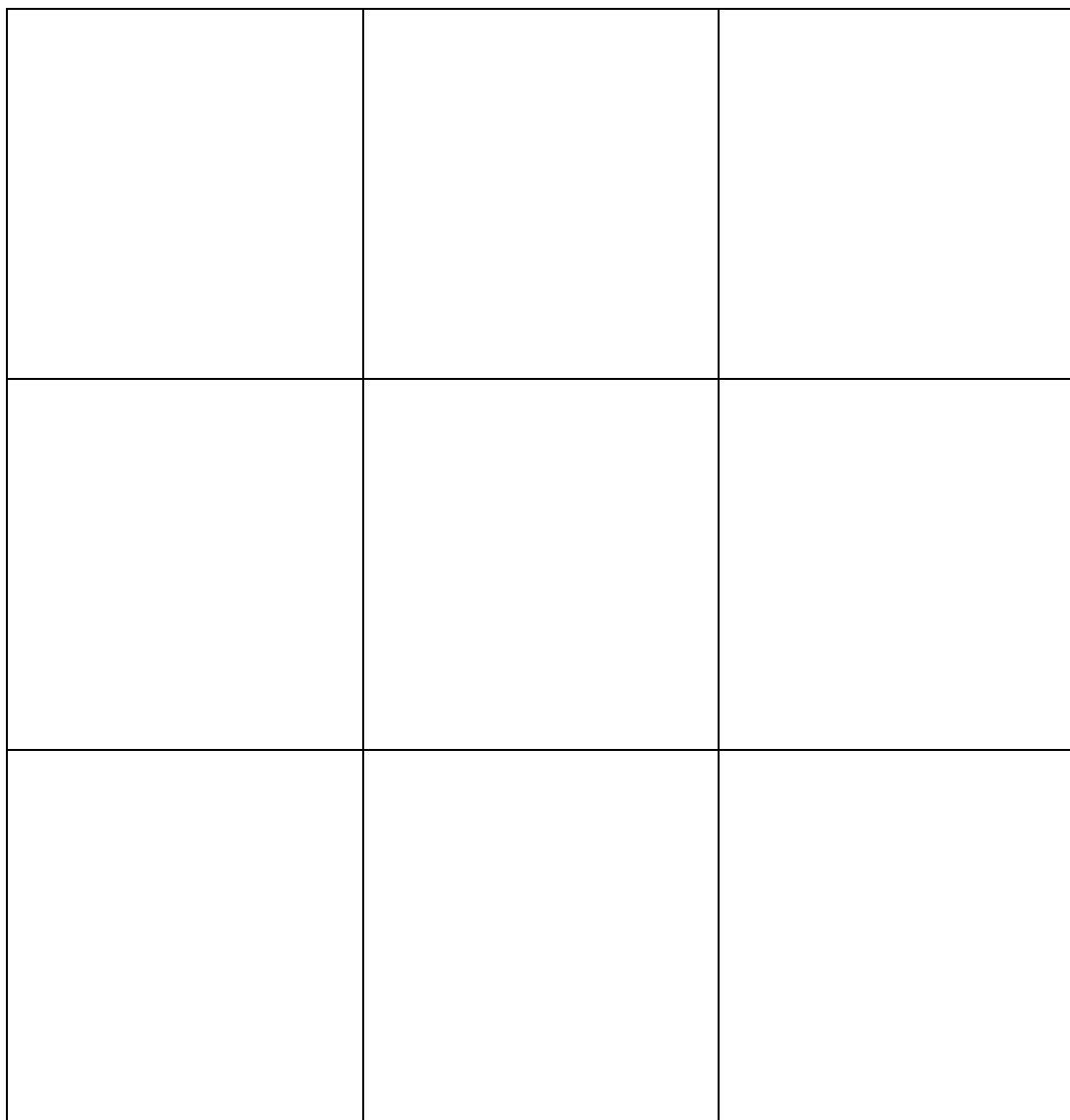
In each of the 9 squares, please share information about your family. You could use pictures (printed or drawn), words, or other ideas. Be as creative as you wish, but please be sure to have all work fit within the squares.

Questions for your family nine-patch quilt block:

1. Who are the members of your family?
2. What game(s) do you like to play with your family?
3. Have you and your family ever gone on a trip?
4. What does your family do for fun?
5. What is the most special object or toy that you have in your home?
6. What is the favorite food that you and your family like to eat?
7. What country/countries did your family members emigrate/immigrate from? What languages does your family speak?
8. What is your favorite book or types of books to read?
9. Do you have any special jobs that you do at home to help your family?

Please return your nine-patch quilt block back to school on \_\_\_\_\_

# Family Nine-Patch Quilt Block





### Appendix E

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Reading Interest Survey

I want to know about your current reading habits and favorite genres to understand your needs as a reader. Circle your answer and explain when you are asked to.

1) Do you enjoy reading? Yes No Sort Of  
Please **explain** why you feel this way.

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2) Do you like to read with a partner? Yes No

3) Do you like to read aloud? Yes No

4) Do you like it when someone reads to you? Yes No

5) Do you like to talk to your friends about reading? Yes No

6) How often do you spend time reading? \_\_\_\_\_ daily \_\_\_\_\_ weekly

7) What are some books you have read lately?

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8) What is something that makes you sad, worries you, or concerns you about school and/or home? \_\_\_\_\_

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9) What is something that makes you happy, excites you, or you enjoy about school and/or home? \_\_\_\_\_

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10) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about you and reading? Please share below:

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Check the genres/types of reading materials you enjoy most:

- |  |                                     |                                       |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> famous people | <input type="checkbox"/> monsters   | <input type="checkbox"/> history      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> movies        | <input type="checkbox"/> computers  | <input type="checkbox"/> animals      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electricity   | <input type="checkbox"/> countries  | <input type="checkbox"/> poetry       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> music         | <input type="checkbox"/> science    | <input type="checkbox"/> cars         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> drama         | <input type="checkbox"/> inventions | <input type="checkbox"/> planes       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insects       | <input type="checkbox"/> singers    | <input type="checkbox"/> outer space  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geography     | <input type="checkbox"/> athletes   | <input type="checkbox"/> crafts       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sports        | <input type="checkbox"/> detectives | <input type="checkbox"/> fairytales   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cooking       | <input type="checkbox"/> jokes      | <input type="checkbox"/> folktales    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> magic         | <input type="checkbox"/> writing    | <input type="checkbox"/> make believe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art           | <input type="checkbox"/> comics     | <input type="checkbox"/> other        |