Learning to Read Across Time: Negotiations and Affiliations of a Reader, Grades 1–8

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When Alicia[1] was in first grade, her mother, Ms. Rodriguez told me about her own experiences in high school. "School wasn't for me. To me it was boring. It was so boring I used to go to sleep." Eight years later, I asked Alicia about the worst part of school; she told me, "Going to sleep in class in the morning." When I asked her if she really slept in class, Alicia responded, "Yeah, when my teacher's boring."

When Alicia was in first grade, I asked her mother why some people never learn to read; she explained: "A lot of them just figured school wasn't for them. They just dropped out." Eight years later, when I asked Alicia why she thought that the kids at school don't like to read, she told me, "'Cause they just not into it."

When Alicia was in first grade, I asked her mother why she liked to read. Ms. Rodriguez responded, "It takes you to a different place. It relaxes you." Eight years later, Alicia told me, "I just like it [reading]; it can take my mind away from things."

What is the significance of mother and daughter expressing the same ideas in almost the same words 8 years apart? Is the similarity in their comments simply because they are both accessing commonplace ways of talking about schooling and literacy? Or is the similarity due to the transfer of certain ways of being, valuing, and knowing across generations? I suspect that both explanations are partially true. Significantly, both involve time and the construction of ways of being, valuing, and knowing across time.

In this paper, I use a case study approach to explore how children's identities as readers are constructed across time as they move thorough school. This case study reveals how one student—Alicia—and her family—her mother, Ms. Rodriguez; her younger sister, Quanzaa; and her four brothers, Tyreek, Leon, Martin, and P.T.—accessed time in ways that were both recursive and future-oriented as they drew on ongoing experiences and familial and historical resources while constructing themselves as readers and as people. Temporal experiences are particularly significant for students like Alicia who are members of communities that historically have not been well served by schools. By attending to time, we can begin to recognize students as agents who draw upon the resources that are available to them at multiple timescales (historical, familial, ongoing) to make sense of their world and their role in it.

This paper has three related purposes that draw our attention to the contextualized nature of people's lives. First, it invites us to recognize the ways in which students and their families use family histories and larger social histories in addition to ongoing experience as they make sense of their world generally and literacy practices in particular. Second, it helps us to recognize students as agents who act within their worlds. Finally, it provides one illustration of the power of long-term longitudinal research.

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[1] All names of people and places presented in this paper are pseudonyms.

After exploring sociocultural understandings related to identity, time, and the development of reading identity, I consider the ways constructs related to time have informed literacy research. I then describe how I applied the construct of timescales to my data to understand the ways Alicia drew upon various experiences of time as she constructed her identity as a reader. Next, I share the methodological processes that contributed to this study. Then, I present two sets of stories. The first explores intersections between race and schooling for members of Alicia's family. The second describes Alicia and her family members as readers. These stories help us understand how Alicia used multiple timescales as she defined and presented herself as a reader and as a student. I conclude the paper by exploring how Alicia used resources at multiple timescales to enact and not enact practices associated with being and not being a particular type of reader.

Traditionally, reading instruction has focused on reading as a set of cognitive skills and processes that enable people to make sense of written text. Learning to read is generally assumed to occur over weeks and months as children engage in formal reading instruction at school. In this paper, I argue that becoming and being a reader extend across much longer periods of time and involve complex negotiations of identity. Becoming a reader involves seeing oneself as the type of person who reads.

Identity: A Critical Aspect of Being a Reader

While identity construction can be understood in many different ways, sociocultural perspectives (Gee, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Sarup, 1996) have described people's identities as socially constructed and constantly subject to the influences of people, institutions, and the contexts in which people live. According to Gee (1999), identities are multiple and situated, and people present various "ways of being" depending upon particular social situations. McCarthey and Moje explained that "identities are always situated in relationships, and . . . power plays a role in how identities get enacted and how people get positioned" (McCarthey & Moje, 2002, p. 231). Gee maintained that "people have differential access to different identities and activities, connected to different sorts of status and social goods, [and this] is a root source of inequality in society" (1999, p. 13).

Lemke (2001) used the construct of timescales to explain how identities are crafted over long periods. As illustrated in Figure 1, the construct of timescales captures the many ways time operates in the world, from the microscopic functions of the cells in our bodies to the cosmic history of the universe extending over billions of years. While time at the lower levels moves quickly and involves microscopic changes, time at the higher levels extends across centuries and involves large-scale changes that proceed gradually (e.g., the coming of the next ice age).

Lemke (2001) argued that because identity formation involves "fundamental changes in attitude or habits of reasoning," it cannot occur within short timescales. To explain long-term fundamental processes, including identity, Lemke proposed an ecological model of timescales that describes how people routinely and simultaneously function within multiple timescales. This model challenges conventional notions of time as linear, cumulative, and invariably moving forward. Lemke suggested that we experience time in recursive and nonlinear ways as we draw on past experiences and project expectations and hopes into the future. Within a few moments, we can draw on our knowledge of a favorite experience, our future hopes, and a historical event

TABLE 1
Representative Timescales for Education and Related Processes

Typical Process	Timescale (sec)	Duration	Reference Events
Chemical synthesis	10^{-5}		Neurotransmitter synthesis.
Membrane process	10^{-4}		Ligand binding.
Neural firings	10^{-3}		Neuron process.
Neuronal patterns	10^{-2}		Multi-neuron process.
Vocal articulation	10^{-1}		Edge of awareness.
Utterance	$1–10$		Word, holophrase, short monologue; in context.
Exchange	$2–10^2$	Seconds to minutes	Dialogue; interpersonal relations; developing situation.
Episode	10^3	o(15 min)	Thematic, functional unit; speech genre, educative.
Lesson	$10^3–10^4$	Hour	Curriculum genre.
Lesson sequence	10^4	o(2.75 hr)	Macro curriculum genre.
School day	10^5	Day	["seamless day"].
Unit	10^6	11.5 days	Thematic, functional unit.
Unit sequence			[rare].
Semester/year curriculum	10^7	4 Months	Organizational level; unit in next scale.
Multi-year curriculum	10^8	o(3.2 years)	Organizational level; limit of institutional planning.
Lifespan educational development	10^9	o(32 years)	Biographical timescale; identity change.
Educational system change	10^{10}	o(320 years)	Historical timescale; new institutions.
Worldsystem change	10^{11}	3200 years	New cultures, languages; limit of historical records.
Ecosystem, climate change	10^{12}	32,000 years	
	10^{13}	320,000 years	Last ice age.
Evolutionary change	10^{14}	3.2 million years	Scale of human evolution.
	10^{15}	32 million years	Dinosaurs.
	10^{16}	317 million years	Pangaea.
Planetary change	10^{17}	3.2 billion years	Origin of life, of planet.
Universal change	10^{18}	32 billion years	Cosmological processes.

Figure 1. **Lemke's timescales (from Lemke, 2000, p. 277).**
Note. O(time) means times on the order of magnitude of worldsystem, ecosystem, evolutionary, planetary, or universal change.

that transpired generations before our own birth, as well as the ongoing events of our current experience. While we might live time chronologically, we are not limited to chronological experiences of time. This is also true of our students.

Wortham (2006) explored the possibilities of examining *cross-timescale relations* to understand identity construction; he described "the set of linked processes across several time scales that collectively explain" aspects of identity construction (p. 9). As Wortham maintained, it is not just one dimension of time that contributes to a person's identity, but rather multiple dimensions that are mediated by the processes that occur within shorter timescales. According to Wortham, people's identities "thicken" over time as they become more consistent and established. Wortham argued that academic learning is related to identity construction as students access resources, experiences, and insights from across various timescales to construct themselves as learners and knowers.

For Lemke (2000), identity relates to the "social types or categories we identify with on the basis of shared values" (p. 283), and these ways of understanding the world extend beyond the here and now of ongoing experience. Specifically, "self-conscious personal identity [reflects the] semiotic articulation of a person's evaluative stance toward interactions. It is what we are inclined to believe or doubt, desire or dislike, expect or find surprising" (p. 283). Belief, doubt, desire, dislike, expectations, and surprise are always grounded in the social and the historical. In Lemke's view, personal identities are never stable or consistent but are always under construction. The interactions we share with people we know well and care for are particularly powerful and become "an essential part of who we are" (p. 285).

Alvermann (2001) focused on the reading identities of struggling adolescent readers. She described reading identities as socially situated and involving multiple possible identity positionings that make it possible to "recognize and be recognized by others like ourselves" (p. 679). Reading identities can include positionings as "avid readers, slow readers, mystery readers [and] struggling readers" (pp. 676–677). The various identities that people construct and assume entail the particular types of literacy practices in which they engage, as well as the ways they view themselves as literate people (Alvermann, 2001; Ferdman, 1990).

Ferdman (1990) explained that "cultural identity mediates the process of becoming readers" (p. 197). People's personal and shared histories as readers, past successes, shared understandings about the uses and purposes of texts, and current struggles and accomplishments—as well as official criteria for reading competence—contribute to the ways in which people identify themselves as readers. These struggles do not occur within neutral social and political contexts, nor are they played out upon a level playing field.

> *Becoming literate* means developing mastery not only over processes, but also over the symbolic media of the culture—the ways in which cultural values, beliefs, and norms are represented. *Being literate* implies actively maintaining contact with collective symbols and the processes by which they are represented. (Ferdman, 1990, p. 188)

Schools incorporate literacy activities that are embedded in the values, beliefs, and norms that depict a culture's vision of literacy.

Previous Uses of Time in Literacy Research

While literacy researchers have attended to time in their research, this attention has either focused on the longitudinal nature of their projects or the sociohistorical nature of culture and shared experience. Some literacy researchers have conducted longitudinal studies that involve groups of participants within particular communities over long periods. For example, Heath (1983) conducted what is perhaps the quintessential example of long-term qualitative research. Between 1969 and 1978, Heath lived with and worked alongside children and families in two Carolina communities. She examined oral language traditions and literacy practices through careful, long-term observation and thoughtful interaction with participants. In a second classic longitudinal study that began in 1977 and extended through the early 1980s, Taylor (1983) documented literacy practices in six families as children learned to read and write. While Taylor recognized the existence of "conservation and change in the transmission of literacy styles and values" (p. 7) within families and documented how parents' memories of the past informed their literacy practices in the present, time was not a central construct in her analysis of the emergent and variable literacy practices that occurred in these homes. More recently, long-term longitudinal research has been conducted in international contexts, including Australian high schools (McLeod & Yates, 2006) and elementary schools (Comber & Barnett, 2003).

Other researchers have attended to the sociohistorical nature of time within short-term projects. Gutiérrez (2007) highlighted the cultural-historical nature of learning and development: "literacy learning is not an individual accomplishment, and instead is built on a long history of relationships and influences, both local and distal" (p. 116). Enciso (2007) explored how history functions as an interpretive frame in literacy education and sociocultural research. She argued that there is an illusion of a unified and accessible past that teachers draw upon to create the interpretive frames they use to make sense of the world. She maintained that researchers must bring a more critical analysis of both memory and imagination to their work. Finally, Pahl (2007) applied the construct of timescales to literacy learning within a family. In a recent paper, she demonstrated how a Turkish child's artistic depiction of a bird operated as a semiotic artifact that crossed multiple timescales, from the immediacy of his current home and school experiences to his family's history and a larger cultural history of migration, flight, and relocation.

The study described here strives to bring together longitudinal research and sociohistorical understandings of time. Not only does it involve longitudinal data collected over long periods, but like the work of Gutiérrez (2007), Enciso (2007), and Pahl (2007), it treats the construct of time as an aspect of participants' experiences and as a factor that informs both literacy learning and identity development.

Application of Timescales to Longitudinal Data

Longitudinal data provide us with unique opportunities to make sense of how people experience time and how these experiences of time inform identity construction and literacy practices. One of the difficulties of longitudinal studies is the sheer quantity of data they produce and thus the innumerable possibilities for analysis and interpretation. In addition, the construct of time can be elusive and difficult to define. To manage a substantial amount of data and apply the contextual construct of time to the data, I have adopted an avowedly simplified framework. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on three broad timescales:

- *Historical timescales.* To make sense of Alicia's experiences, I explore historically constructed accounts of people and events that came before our generation and are known to us with various degrees of specificity. We may not personally be able to recount textbook-style details of these histories, but general understandings and insights about historical accounts have been conveyed though the media, school experiences, and shared cultural knowledge. For the people described in this paper, these historical timescales include the history of African American people in the United States. This history was particularly relevant to Alicia as a young African American woman. As a student who attended a low-income urban school and as a literacy learner, Alicia was also influenced by the histories that accompany schooling in urban communities and traditions associated with literacy teaching and learning in urban schools. Not only were Alicia and her family recipients of this history, they were also actors within it.

- *Familial timescales.* Familial timescales reference the experiences of Alicia's family members and their personal histories with race, schooling, and literacy. The stories of Alicia's mother and siblings, along with Alicia's past experiences, are relevant to the ways she made sense of race, schooling, and literacy. Familial timescales include counter-stories (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 32) that expose and challenge majoritarian stories of racial privilege. These familial stories shatter complacency while challenging dominant discourses related to race.

- *Ongoing timescales.* These timescales refer to ongoing activities that occurred during the interviews I conducted with Alicia and her family, as well as events that occurred during the preceding weeks and months—events that occurred around the time of each interview in a loosely defined present.

Methodological Issues and Longitudinal Research

In a book on longitudinal qualitative research, Saldaña (2003) did not specify a time requirement for such research, stating only that "longitudinal research means a *lonnnnnnng* time" (p. 1). In his view, longitudinal research helps us:

1. View the breadth and depth of people's life experiences, and

2. Document change by comparing data collected through long-term observations of actors and their perspectives.

The longitudinal nature of the study reported here allowed both a depth of understandings about literate identities and an analysis of change across time as I observed Alicia develop as a reader. The "periodic restudy" (Saldaña, 2003) of the same families at 3- and 4-year intervals over a 10-year period enabled me to follow the families for a significant period without being overly intrusive in their lives or producing an unmanageable amount of data.

My analysis involved a phenomenological search for core categories that occurred across time and for lines of meaning and patterns of understanding that were salient to the participants. Marton (1989) described phenomenology as "a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various

aspects and phenomena in the world around them" (p. 31). Garfinkel (1967) invited us to treat our everyday experiences, circumstances, and understandings of our worlds as the subjects of study and contemplation; few things are more everyday and unavoidable than time. Time is passing now as I write these words, and a different time will pass as you read them. Despite the everydayness of time and the close attention it is given in a world full of clocks, calendars, personal planners, and Blackberries, time is given little serious philosophical or epistemological attention in research studies. We function within class periods, semesters, marking periods, time on task, scope and sequences, and annual assessment targets, but rarely do we attend to what time means as we experience it or to the role it plays in our research.

The uniqueness of participants' experiences and understandings does not reduce their experiences to personal accounts. The people described in this paper had a shared history. Not only were they members of the same family, living in the same community and, with the exception of Ms. Rodriguez, attending schools in the same district, but they shared social positionings related to race and social class.

The Research Process

The qualitative longitudinal study that is the basis of this paper was conducted in four phases; this paper draws on the first three, each occurring 3 or 4 years apart. I began the collective case study when I was the first-grade teacher of the children who were the focus of the study and concluded it in 2007 when the children were scheduled to be in high school (I continue to analyze high school data). In this paper, I follow one child and her family from first grade through middle school. In the first phase of the study, I asked 10 randomly selected students from my first-grade class, along with their parents, to participate in a series of interviews focusing on concepts about reading.

The families participated in the study during the children's first-grade year, fourth/fifth-grade year, and seventh/eighth-grade year. In first grade, the students attended Rosa Parks Elementary School, a large urban school where 97% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. That school served children from the lowest socioeconomic population of a midsized northeastern city that had the 11th highest child poverty rate in the nation. Rosa Parks Elementary School had been on the state's list of schools in need of improvement, and it was slated to be taken over by the state if test scores did not improve during the year in which my initial research was conducted. Consistent with the district's high mobility rate, 4 years later many of the students had left Rosa Parks Elementary School to attend other schools in the same district. By middle school, eight students from the original sample remained in the study and attended schools across the district; two had moved out of the school district and could not be located. One student participated in the study through middle school but declined an invitation to participate in high school.

Phase 1 was planned as a 1-year study. Because I was the students' first-grade teacher, it involved a rich range of data sources, including four interviews with children and parents, fieldnotes containing my reflections and classroom observations, student portfolios and classroom assessments, and audiotaped class discussions. Phases 2 and 3 involved two interviews with students and parents; reading assessments, which I conducted; and on-demand writing samples completed during the interviews. Reading assessments at the early grades

involved running records of leveled texts (Clay, 2002) and story retellings. Reading assessments beyond Grade 5 involved informal reading inventories that included a word list, a reading passage, and comprehension questions (Ekwall & Shanker, 1993, Grades 1–9; Leslie & Caldwell, 2006, middle school through high school).

Table 1
Research Phases, Participants, Data, and Analysis

Phase	Participants	Data	Analysis
1 (Grade 1)	• 10 families	• 4 parent interviews • 4 student interviews • Fieldnotes • Portfolio/classroom assessments • Classroom discussions	• Coding across studies
2 (Grades 4/5)	• 9 original families • 1 new family	• 2 parent interviews • 2 student interviews • Reading assessments • Writing samples	• Case study development
3 (Grades 7/8)	• 8 original families • 1 family added in Grades 4/5	• 2 parent interviews • 2 student interviews • Reading assessments • Writing samples	• Coding across studies
4 (Grades 8–11)	• 7 original families • 1 family added in Grades 4/5	• 3 parent interviews • 3 student interviews • Reading assessments • Writing samples • School observations • Interviews with teachers • Optional writing, photos, audiotapes journals, and/or drawings	• Case study development

The final phase of the research project was conducted when the students were predicted to be in high school. In actuality, some students had left school, and others had been repeatedly retained and were still attending middle school. In this paper, I make few references to events that occurred during the final phase of the project, although analysis of this data is ongoing.

Analysis of Longitudinal Data

I transcribed and coded audiotapes during each phase of the study to identify salient categories of information. During Phases 1 and 3, data was coded into categories, and contrastive analysis methods were used to organize these categories and identify themes and patterns across cases. During Phase 2, data was coded for each case separately, and case summaries were constructed for each family. Once cases were constructed and coded, I looked across the cases to

identify inter-case patterns and larger categories of data.[2] As data was coded from each phase of the study, I crafted a chart to link similar themes from various phases of the research project. I then viewed categories, themes, and patterns from across the phases of the study longitudinally.

This paper presents a case study that was constructed during Phase 3. While I coded data from that phase of the study, issues related to time, student choice in texts, and the intersection between race and schooling became evident. While the Phase 3 analysis initially involved cross-case coding, I opted to use a case study approach in this paper based on the complexity of identity construction across time and the detail needed to capture this complexity.

Saldaña (2003) suggested that researchers attend to the integration of race, gender, and class in their long-term studies, contending that these dimensions are critical. An important methodological practice adopted from critical race theory involves identifying and sharing counter-stories presented in the data to challenge majoritarian accounts that maintain the status quo, specifically White privilege. Counter-stories are a "tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). These counter-stories circulate through storytelling, the recounting of family histories, and family member biographies and serve as sources of strength for both the teller and listener. Counter-stories "recognize the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). As Delgado (1989) has explained, "oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are a tool to their own survival and liberation" (p. 2436).

Reflections on a Decade of Research

On my final visit to Alicia's family, when Alicia and her little sister Quanzaa were both in high school, Quanzaa reminded me that despite my years of teaching and researching in this community, I was an outsider. While chatting about the rough neighborhood, the girls explained that they relied on their friends to "have their back." I asked if they would have my back if we were out on the street. Quanzaa laughed and said, "Yeah, they definitely pick on you." She explained: "You're not from around here." While not being from the neighborhood clearly limited the perspectives and background I brought to this research, it also signaled that I had much to learn. Thus, the counter-stories were not just told to recount events; they entailed pedagogical efforts to help me understand the family's experiences. While I was not consciously aware of their pedagogical efforts, Alicia and her family effectively and consistently used counter-stories in the interviews for my benefit.

Time has an impact on me as a researcher, and my own history is relevant to the account I present in this paper. While I grew up at the poverty line with a parent who struggled with mental illness, my family was academically oriented. My good grades in high school led to financial aid and a state college education. In college and beyond, my White skin belied my background of sparse meals, hand-me-down clothes, panic over car repairs, and a lack of

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[2] I'm also using this case study technique to analyze data from the ongoing fourth phase of the study.

furniture in a house where the mortgage was always due. White privilege paved my way to teaching jobs, a comfortable home in the suburbs, and financial security. Despite my poor upbringing, I am not African American and have never lived in a city or attended schools like the ones where I eventually taught.

A Majoritarian Story

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) described majoritarian stories as privileging the status quo and established dominance, including White privilege. Majoritarian stories benefit people who are privileged in the existing system through opportunities and benefits that are denied to others. While this paper will tell a very different story, there is a majoritarian story that could easily be constructed about Alicia and her family. This majoritarian story would characterize Ms. Rodriguez as a single mother who never graduated from high school and relies partially on welfare to support her six children. It would portray Alicia's teenage brothers as marginal students who have had various encounters with the law. It might reference the gang affiliations of Alicia's friends, the fight that placed her in long-term suspension in high school, her brother's incarceration, and her own pregnancy.

I argue that this majoritarian story is a dangerous construction that draws upon deficit discourses about urban families and youth. As a teacher, I might have easily accepted this story if I had not conducted this research and come to know this family and the other families in this project.

In the next section, I present an alternative story—specifically, two sets of counter-stories based on themes that emerged during the coding of data in Phase 3 and throughout the research project. The first set of counter-stories examines the intersection of race and schooling for Alicia and her family members; these stories draw significantly on both familial and historical timescales, including the histories of African American people in the United States. The second set of counter-stories is deeply grounded in familial and ongoing experiences of the family, focusing specifically on Alicia's reading and literacy practices. Following each set of counter-stories, I analyze the data with attention to historical, familial, and ongoing timescales. In particular, I examine how a non-linear and recursive sense of time operates as a contextual factor that influences the interrelated identities that Alicia constructed relative to race, schooling, and literacy.

Counter-Stories

School, Race, and Alicia's Family

Stories and themes. Life in Alicia's home, like life in all homes, was filled with conversations and stories. Such stories contribute to the ways children construct their worlds and family members understand their roles. This is not a simple process of assimilating existing ways of thinking. Family voices coexist with the many other voices that children encounter. Teachers, peers, television, music, church, and neighbors contribute as well. However, family voices, because they are the voices of people that children love, are particularly powerful.

In Alicia's home, I witnessed a set of counter-stories related to school and race. These stories were shared over long periods of time in response to questions I asked about reading and schooling. These counter-stories challenge official readings of texts, people, and situations. I strongly believe that these stories were told prior to my visits and will continue to be told long after I left. Family members often chimed in on these familiar stories, providing missing details and expanding on each another's comments. While many counter-stories were told over the years I worked with this family, I present three sets of stories in this section of the paper, one for each phase of the research project.

The first set of counter-stories related to language; it challenged dominant discourses that characterize speakers of African American English as lazy or ignorant based on language. In this story, we recognize the importance Ms. Rodriguez placed on her children's ability to code-switch between the African American English they spoke at home and the language of schools and businesses. She explained that she would test her older boys to make sure they could talk "proper" by sending them to talk to people on the street whom she believed were speakers of privileged forms of English. Ms. Rodriguez also shared a related counter-story from her own childhood:

> My aunt, when she home, she like, "Ya'll, get it, yalalala." . . . When she used to come to school, she'd say, "Just, you know" (*spoken sweetly and "properly"*), and I'm sitting there like (*exhibiting an expression of amazement*). "Wait a minute, Aunt, you ain't just, that ain't the same way you talk to us when we be home." And her's like, "No, no, no, no. This is different." So when she explained it, I was like, "Okay." So, when I'm out in that street, I can say, "Yo, what's up." But when I get downtown [at the city school district offices] and I'm in front of everybody, you know, and I'm dressed, it's, "Hi, how are you doing?" and "Well, I'm here for so and so."

Ms. Rodriguez presented a sophisticated analysis of language. She was aware of the way language positions people and the privileging that accompanies some forms of English. She valued the ability to code-switch and told me that she was glad that her sons could "make that conflict" between African American English and privileged forms of English because as she explained, "It's easier for them." In this counter-story, Ms. Rodriguez challenged the view of African American English as evidence of ignorance; in fact, she described sophisticated understandings about language on the part of herself and her aunt, and she was clearly working to share these sophisticated understandings with her children.

In addition to her insights about language, Ms. Rodriguez was aware of the assumptions that were made about her by teachers based on her status as a poor, single, African American mother:

> A lot of teachers in a lot of schools, they figure you live, um, in a low, and they say this is the ghetto, right? And they say a lot of people is in the ghetto [is on welfare], so they assume everybody is on welfare. And they'll say, "When your mother get her check, tell her to buy you so and so." And that's embarrassing for the kid.

Assumptions about being poor surfaced again when Alicia was in fifth grade. In this second set of counter-stories, Ms. Rodriguez described the dangers of attending schools in large cities:

> See, I come from New York. So, with us, it's—in New York a lot of times you slip through that system, and you just skid. The kids get pushed through school without learning anything. And I *refuse* to let that happen to mine. *I refuse it!* And it got to the point where even when we got up here, you have to be that parent that actually cares and let them know that you care and let them know they're not going to push your child through school.

Three years later, Ms. Rodriguez reiterated this opinion, this time directly naming race as crucial to the ways people are positioned in schools:

> My point of view is more or less more that if you're White, it seems like you get a better education, but a Black person a lot of times they just try to push you through school, and which I refuse to have to them push my kids through school.

Ms. Rodriguez's account was not one of acceptance; it was about pushing back. She described the importance of "talking to the teacher," explaining that teachers "figure most of the time the Black kids, a lot of them, they have a parent that don't care, so you have to actually show them that, uh-uh, no, this is a parent that do care." In this counter-story, Ms. Rodriguez expressed a distrust of the school system and described her role as an advocate for her children. As a parent "that do care," Ms. Rodriguez challenged the assumptions that schools hold about poor urban parents and demanded that the school be held accountable for educating her children. She explained that she was careful to make her presence known and would "write letters, show up at school meetings and talk to the teachers" to ensure that her children were well served.

By eighth grade, Alicia had become very critical of her teachers. When I asked if she was polite in school, she said "sometimes" and explained, "It depends on how the teacher be acting towards you. If you act mean towards me, I'm acting mean back. If you act nice, I'm acting nice back." However, Alicia reported that not all the students "acted nice" to nice teachers. She said that her school was "not really" a good place to learn: "The teachers don't, [they] act like they don't like the kids or they scared of them." She told me, "When the kids fight in class, they don't try to break them up. They don't. They think that the kids will try to hurt them or something."

To address my questions about teachers, Ms. Rodriguez offered a counter-story about her youngest daughter, Quanzaa:

> For every little thing, I mean every little thing, they [get suspended] . . . Quanzaa got suspended last year. Because I told her to wait outside for her ride. And they talk about she couldn't wait outside. She had to wait in the RTS [in-school detention] room. I said, "No, I told her to wait here. You can't tell her something different because all that's going to do is upset her." She got suspended for it. Talking about she was talking back. And all she was doing was trying to tell them, "My mother told me to wait here."

In this counter-story, what the teacher perceived as "talking back" was understood by Ms. Rodriguez as Quanzaa's attempt to explain her actions to her teacher. We can certainly envision

that the teacher might have had a different reading of the situation, drawing on commonly accepted characterizations of African American girls as mouthy, oppositional, and belligerent. While her mother maintained that Quanzaa was merely trying to explain the situation, Quanzaa's attempts to "explain" were experienced by the teacher as uncooperative and confrontational. In this paper, I am not concerned with the *truth* of the stories told; the importance of the narrative lies in how this story, and stories like it, contributed to the ways of being, knowing, and valuing that informed Alicia's evolving identity and to her relationship with school and literacy across time. Ms. Rodriguez's account of Quanzaa's experiences is a counter-story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that challenges stereotypes of young Black girls.

Analysis. These stories are among many involving race, class, and schooling that I was told over the 10-year project. Stories that I do not have the space to recount here included teachers' telling Quanzaa to have her mother buy her gloves when "she get her [welfare] check"; an account of a "racist principal" at the local high school; police profiling of Alicia's brothers in school and in the community; uncaring teachers who were "just there for a paycheck"; and a critique that charged high-stakes testing programs with making large numbers of students think they were "stupid." These were not passing comments. They were stories that served particular purposes during the interviews and at the familial timescale within which family stories and past experiences were frequently recounted and shared. As Alicia and her siblings experienced events that occurred at the familial timescale, they learned necessary social critiques. They learned that race matters; that social institutions, including schooling and law enforcement, could not be trusted; and that acts of agency (e.g., writing letters, showing up at school meetings, talking to teachers) were essential in dealing with schools and other social institutions.

The stories reported above involved accounts at the familial timescale. They were stories of Ms. Rodriguez as a child, accounts of Alicia's siblings from months and years prior to the interviews, and Alicia's interpretation of her experiences with teachers. While the stories were recounted in the lived present of the ongoing interview, they described events and experiences from the familial past in ways that denied that time is merely cumulative. Stories from different times and places intermingled, co-occurred, and were shared in a non-chronology. These stories were recursive as we revisited accounts and themes across interviews that occurred years apart and revisited events that were ongoing at the time of one interview and later recounted as a past experience. Stories of getting "pushed through school" told when Alicia was in fifth grade were echoed in eighth grade. Ms. Rodriguez's insights about language attributed to her aunt were enacted in her own interactions with her sons as they became young men. Alicia and her siblings learned important lessons about the world—how to view the world, and how to act as agents in their own lives as they confronted situations that were inequitable and racially biased. While the stories referenced the past, they targeted the future and provided rich lessons for the children in the family.

The stories drew upon historical as well as familial timescales—the larger histories of racism and classism in the United States. When Ms. Rodriguez worried about the language her children used in official contexts, she was not merely connecting their language to the lessons she learned from her aunt. Rather, she was drawing on more formidable and historically embedded timescales that privilege White middle- and upper class forms of English over African American English. When Ms. Rodriguez confronted Quanzaa's teacher for assuming that she was a welfare mother who did not recognize that her daughter needed gloves, she was

confronting not only an individual teacher, but also a dominant discourse about poor urban parents. Children being pushed through school without learning was not simply a fear lived out in this family; it is a larger historical discourse connected to underfunded and understaffed schools, deficit assumptions about the learning capabilities of African American children, and the under-education of generations of African American children in the United States. Stories of discrimination, economic disparity, racially based assumptions, and police profiling are not exclusive to Alicia's family; they are endemic and historically pervasive in the lives of African American people. As Alicia made sense of her world, she was drawing upon these historical accounts, and they contributed to her ways of being and her understandings of the world. Alicia witnessed the role race played in the lives of family members, and as we will see in the following section, race eventually became salient in Alicia's literacy practices.

Despite the power of historical and familial ways of understanding the world, Alicia did not passively construct her understanding of the world. The perspectives of her mother, or her brothers, or her little sister did not inscribe Alicia with particular views or opinions. As the quotes that open this paper clearly illustrate, Alicia pulled from the words, stories, and experiences of family members; however, she also constructed her own readings of the world. Alicia's world incorporated some experiences that challenged and complicated the meanings that circulate at the familial timescale. For example, she told me about her fifth-grade teacher whom she described as "ghetto," which she explained means "cool." She talked with enthusiasm about the Step Team at her school, and for most of the time I knew Alicia, she was an A and B student. She continued to be a capable reader throughout high school. She told me that her middle school principal was excellent and highly respected by the students. The close relationship I shared with Alicia over 10 years clearly challenged her family's characterization of teachers as uncaring. There were tensions between Alicia's understanding of the world and the counter-stories told by her mother and brothers. All of school was not negative, and the family's reading of the world was not uniform.

Alicia constructed her own relationships to schooling and her own understandings of herself as a young African American woman within a particular set of relationships and experiences. Certainly the critiques voiced by Ms. Rodriguez and Alicia's brothers were relevant, but there were many other voices spanning multiple timescales that informed Alicia's understanding of the world as she created her own unique remix of stories across time.

Alicia's Reading Preferences at Home and School

Stories and themes. Every time I visited Alicia, I asked her about the books she was reading. Over the years, I heard about many books and other literate activities that Alicia enjoyed; I also learned what Alicia did not enjoy. In this paper, I argue that Alicia's preferences were not simple idiosyncratic decisions. Alicia's choices were intimately connected to the identities she was constructing and her developing social alliances. Alicia's book choices were connected and unconnected with her peers and her family members in complex ways.

One of my most vivid memories of Alicia in first grade is of watching her read with a small group of girls every morning on the carpet of our classroom. As they entered the classroom, I would greet them and ask them to find a book to read. Alicia would quickly gather a group of friends and multiple copies of a favorite book; together, the girls would find a spot on

the carpet and read the book cover to cover as an expressive and animated choral performance. When they finished with one book, they would return to the book corner and select a new title. This routine would continue for 20 minutes until the bell signaled that it was time to stop. The books they chose were often stories that they had read many times; these reading sessions were as much, if not more, about friends as they were about books.

It was when Alicia was in first grade that I first asked her what she liked to read. Without pausing, she answered, "School books." I asked her which books she liked, and she named titles from our classroom library: *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* (Trapani, 1993) and *One Gorilla (*Morozumi, 1990). She told me that she knew she was a good reader because she could read by herself.

Ms. Rodriguez brought her own school experiences to the interviews. She told me about Mr. Gordon, her favorite teacher in seventh grade. She explained:

> He used to joke and act out a lot of those scenes and stuff, so it was like, OK, I can learn this. I can do this. But it was fun and then we had a lot of plays and a lot of poems that we used to read and that was interesting to me. The regular textbook wasn't interesting. It was like going to sleep.

Ms. Rodriguez spoke about the basal reading program, saying, "Them books was soooo easy and I used to breeze through them . . . [The teacher would ask,] 'So what are you up to?' I's like, 'You don't want to know. Can I get another book?'" Ms. Rodriguez explained that the textbooks still weren't enough, and the teacher resorted to visiting other classrooms to find reading materials for Ms. Rodriguez and her peers. She described another teacher who could "keep our interest" by providing newspapers and books or poems that they "had to figure out." Ms. Rodriguez enjoyed English class. She explained, "See, personally I liked novels and stuff like that, so if [you] want to make a child read, just give them something that they like to read."

In first grade, Alicia's enthusiasm for school and for the books she found in her classroom was notable; however, by fifth grade that interest had waned. When I asked her about her favorite books at school, she succinctly answered, "None." She explained to me that she enjoyed the Baby-sitter's Club books (Martin & Lerangris, 1986–2000) that she chose to read at silent reading time in school. She told me that she had read about eight of the books in the series. I asked Alicia if there were any Black characters in the Baby-sitter's books. She told me that there were but she couldn't remember their names. When asked if it was important that books have Black characters, Alicia shook her head.

Alicia identified some of the books that were assigned in school—*There's an Owl in the Shower* (George, 1997) and *The Cry of the Crow* (George, 1988)—but told me that *Two Under Par* (Henke, 2005) was her favorite. Her reading group was reading the book, but when asked what the story was about, Alicia responded, "I don't know." I asked what she remembered from the story, and she described only the opening scene and seemed unable to recount the rest. All of the assigned books featured White protagonists living in rural or suburban settings. Alicia did enjoy when the writing teacher came to her class; she explained that she and her classmates were writing scenes for a play.

By eighth grade, Ms. Rodriguez told me that Alicia never brought books home from school and never visited the local library. She explained, "Alicia's more interested in how she looks now . . . She won't go outside with her hair undone. Clothes got to be OK." Ms. Rodriguez assured me that she was not worried about Alicia, "'cause I know that's just teenagers who want to be with the in-people."

Alicia said they were reading *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe at school. She complained that "it's kinda boring" and "it ain't scary." Upon questioning, Alicia rethought her response, saying, "I think the story ain't boring, I just think the way my teacher reads it [is boring]." When asked if there was anything else they were doing in school related to reading, Alicia responded, "We ain't doing nothing."

Alicia's dwindling interest in school reading was a concern, but it was not the whole story. Rich literacy practices occurred in Alicia's home, challenging majoritarian stories that describe poor urban families as illiterate and aliterate. Ms. Rodriguez traced her love of reading back to her mother. She laughed as she recounted her memories:

> When I first learned to read, my mother taught me. And she was teaching me the ABC's and stuff like that and she was teaching me words. But she wasn't teaching me the small words like *it* and *is* and *the*. So when I learned how to read I learned the big words, and then when she used to always tell me to read to her, it was like, "How come you know all the big words?" I said, "That's what you taught me. You didn't teach me the small ones." (*laughs*) That's [the way it was] and it was fun because it was doing something different and I always like a challenge.

Ms. Rodriguez was committed to helping her children become good readers. She spoke extensively about the importance of supporting her children as readers.

> My kids started reading from the beginning. I read to them and by me reading to them they wanted to read. So I figure that's probably the type of child that [they] will grow up [to be].

Ms. Rodriguez told me, "All of my friends are good readers, all of them." She explained with enthusiasm, "We like to trade [books]." Ms. Rodriguez laughed and recreated a typical conversation:

> Ms. Rodriguez: Got a good novel?
> Friend: Ahhhhh, did you read so and so, so and so? No?
> Ms. Rodriguez: You got it?
> Friend: Yeah. You should check it out.
> Ms. Rodriguez: Send it by so and so or, I come and get it.

Ms. Rodriguez was enthusiastic about sharing her love of reading with her children. She explained that it was important that her younger children see her and the older children reading. Alicia's brothers played a significant role in Alicia's development as a reader. "When she's reading along, she comes to me. And if she don't come to me, she goes to one of her brothers. And we tell her the same thing: Sound it out!" Alicia confirmed her mother's account that her

brothers read with her and assured me that she planned to help her little sister with reading: "I want to help her listen to the words."

During my first visit to Alicia's home, her mother showed me a huge box of books that she had been collecting over the years since her boys were little. The box was obviously well used, and the entire family gathered around to view the books. Inside the box were board books, Little Golden Books, Dr. Seuss books, discarded library books, and old school textbooks; many of the books were tattered from use. At his mother's request, Tyreek brought about 20 books from his bedroom and exchanged them for books from the box. Leon, who was about 13, asked for all the Dr. Seuss books. Ms Rodriguez refused, explaining that he was too old for those books. P.T. got his social studies textbook and offered it to Tyreek to read. Tyreek accepted the book readily.

When Alicia was in fifth grade, Ms. Rodriguez explained that Donald Goines was her favorite author. For my benefit, Ms. Rodriguez explained, "He is a Black author. . . . He write about his life and about different parts of his life. The last one I read was *White Man's Justice, Black Man's Grief* (Goines, 1973). She told me that she had been reading a book by Terry McMillan entitled *Mama* (1987). One of her friends shared the book with her:

> My girlfriend said, "She [the protagonist] reminds me of you in some ways," and I was like, when I started reading that, I called her up and I said, "Roberta, no, uh-uh. She don't remind you of me. Home girl [the main character in the story] is a whore." [Roberta responded,] "No, I am talking she got five kids." I am like, "Oh okay. That part yeah, but you know, a whore?"

Ms. Rodriguez's book-sharing habits extended to her children: "I just finished reading that [*Mama*], now Leon reading it." When I returned for the next interview, Leon had also finished *Mama* and was looking for a new book to read. He reported, "I need more books. That's why I called Roberta." Leon told us that in school he had read *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare, 2004 version), "A Rose for Emily" (Faulkner, 1930/1993), and *A Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry, 1959/2002). He said that Shakespeare was his favorite.

Leon's brothers primarily read magazines, including *Sports Illustrated* and various music magazines. During Alicia's fifth-grade year, Tyreek brought a biography of Martin Luther King home from school, and Ms. Rodriguez read it to Alicia and Quanzaa. Tyreek told me that he was reading novels including some from the Goosebumps series (Stine, 1992–1997); Alicia and Quanzaa later reported reading these books. In addition to the Baby-sitter's Club books, Alicia reported reading books by Judy Blume and books about Winnie-the-Pooh (a unique combination). At the time, she was reading a biography of David Robinson, an African American basketball player.

Although by eighth grade Alicia's enthusiasm for the books she read at school had diminished, she remained a reader at home. When I asked her mother what Alicia had been reading, Ms. Rodriguez sent Alicia to get her most recent book and said to me, "She's in those novel things. Love novels." Alicia emerged right away with the book *Ruby* by Rosa Guy (1991). She explained that she had not read it yet and that she "stole it" from Leon. Ms Rodriguez told

me, "Alicia can read her little tail off" and explained that the "last time we checked her reading we was on 10th-grade level."

Alicia's reading tastes varied at this stage. She continued to read Goosebumps and Baby-sitter's Club books, but she also enjoyed love stories. She tried to remember the title of a book she had read recently and told me that she had gotten the book from "the lady next door." She generally got her books from her mother, who got books from her friends. Alicia explained, "Then she read them, then I take them and I read them." Alicia told me that they were "grown-up books" that were "mostly about sex." At one point in the interview, Alicia told me that her friends sometimes read magazines, but later she said that when she is with her friends, "We don't read nothing."

I asked Ms. Rodriguez if Alicia liked to read at this point in her development. Ms. Rodriguez said "Yes" and added, "She likes to write" and explained that Alicia wrote poems. When I asked Alicia if she would read one of her poems into my tape recorder, she readily agreed and disappeared into her room, returning with a tattered notebook. Alicia told me that she wrote these poems while she was visiting P.T. in Virginia. She could not explain how she learned to write poetry, saying, "I just started." (See appendix for two of Alicia's poems.)

Analysis. The literacy lives of Alicia and her family present a counter-story that challenges majoritarian accounts of reading in low-income, urban families. While people tend to characterize urban families as illiterate or aliterate, the larger sample of families in this study suggests great variability in the literacy practices of urban families. Alicia's family is a rich example of a low-income African American family that engages in a number of literacy practices ranging from reading magazines to exchanging novels.

Familial timescales highlight long-term family literacy practices. Helping her children become readers was important to Ms. Rodriguez, and her commitment was grounded in her own reading experiences with her mother. Ms. Rodriguez's favorite teachers, books, and school activities were alive in her interactions with her children and their schooling. Continuing her family's story, Alicia and her brothers enjoyed reading. Sharing books, reading together, and helping siblings with reading were accepted and expected practices. Tyreek helped Alicia with her reading, and Alicia in turn helped Quanzaa. Tyreek, Alicia, and Quanzaa shared an interest in the Goosebumps series. Tyreek gladly accepted Leon's social studies textbook. Leon "stole" his mother's books. Alicia got books from her brothers, her mother, and a neighbor. Leon loved Shakespeare. Although they did not choose to read the same texts and they were not equally enthralled with school reading, they all valued reading. Across time, some school activities aligned with Alicia's home literacy practices and the social nature of reading in her home. When Alicia and her friends read together each morning in first grade or co-wrote a play in fifth grade, they mirrored Ms. Rodriguez's description of trading books with her friends. However, over time Alicia began to view other school reading experiences negatively.

Familial accounts of reading were not separate from the counter-stories related to race and schooling that were presented earlier. Stories about racism in schools, police profiling on the streets, the need for competence with privileged forms of English, and the importance of actively challenging assumptions that are often made about poor African American children drew on the family's experience and contributed to sense-making at familial and historical timescales;

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insights from various timescales informed Alicia's reading practices and evolving literate identity.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Alicia's reading trajectory was the increasing significance race played in Alicia's reading preferences. Although in 5th grade Alicia reported that race did not matter, the books that she reported reading and enjoying in 8th and 11th grade are increasingly connected to race. Race was also central to the reading practices of the family. Novels written by African American authors and depicting the lives of African American people who inhabited urban communities were valued. In fifth grade, Tyreek's biography of Martin Luther King and Alicia's biography of an African American basketball player foreshadowed the importance of race in Alicia's later book choices, including novels that involved African American characters. The novels themselves were counter-stories that talked back to majoritarian accounts. Just as familial stories entailed strategic insights related to language, strategies for working with institutions, and stories of people in difficult situations, the books that Alicia increasingly read contained the voices and stories of African American people. The books Ms. Rodriguez and Alicia chose were clearly realistic and relevant to their worlds. They described African American people living in difficult situations that involved economic and institutional challenges. The stories in these books echoed the counter-stories told in Alicia's family.

Yet, Alicia's story is not a simple tale of resistance. Despite Alicia's changing preferences, Alicia's interest in the Baby-sitter's Club and Goosebumps books did not change even when her other preferences reflected a strong commitment to books that depicted African American characters as well as more mature content. She continued to be successful in school despite her critique of teachers and the books they read. Alicia's reading identity was neither one-dimensional nor simple; it was neither reified nor stagnant.

Historical as well as familial timescales were relevant to the development of Alicia's identity as a reader. While some historical accounts entail deficit discourses about families, others celebrate the importance of literacy in African American families and communities. The Freedom Schools, biographies of Frederick Douglass, slave narratives, the histories of Black colleges, and the writings of Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Black authors whose works were read by Ms. Rodriguez and her children attest to a rich literate history that Alicia and her family simultaneously drew upon and contributed to. Not just academic texts but also television shows (e.g., *Roots*, *The Cosby Show*), movies (*Amistad*, *Amazing Grace*, *Malcolm X*), and other media resources contribute to our understandings at historical timescales. While Alicia and her family members may not have known the specifics of the literacy histories they drew upon and they may not have been able to provide dates and details related to these events and individuals, a dedication to literacy learning is a part of the African American history that extended to Alicia and her siblings.

Historical timescales reflect ways of understanding the world that have been constructed over long periods of time. Traditions associated with English classrooms contributed to the types of books Alicia was assigned to read in school. The Baby-sitter's Club, Goosebumps, and the African American novels she read in eighth grade were not among these approved texts. None of the books that Alicia was assigned to read in school featured African American characters. Alicia dismissed assigned books as "boring," and while she expressed enthusiasm for the books she was

reading at home, she did not share or discuss these books with her friends. Despite the social reading activities that Alicia shared with her first-grade peers and the rich social reading activities that occurred in her home, social notions of reading did not extend to her peers. Lines were drawn relative to literacy, alliances, and identity.

Alicia drew upon historical timescales that referenced literacy as a dimension of her African American identity; she accessed familial timescales within her family that positioned reading as a shared and social activity; and she tapped into ongoing, lived timescales that involved writing as a personal activity. Pulling from these various timescales in various ways reveals the complexity of *being literate* and *enacting literacy.* These constructions involved the resources that were available within a particular context (i.e., being African American within an urban school) and agential choices that carried their own contingencies (i.e., peer, sibling, and school expectations). Together, complicated calculations merged in complex ways that were dependent on family, tied to peers, alternative to school, compatible with siblings, and manageable within communities. They framed the reader, Alicia, in a particular time and place, and in reference to other people. Across time, I witnessed Alicia's identities sedimenting and thickening in particular ways. Race, peers, adolescence, and gender were part of this construction as Alicia accessed multiple time scales.

Identity construction always involves tensions. We all experience pressure from people, institutions, and social groups to behave in particular ways, and sometimes these expectations do not resonate with our values, experiences, and practices. For Alicia, tensions occurred when she confronted teachers who expected her respect but did not respect her; offered her books that did not reflect her experiences and interests; and failed to demonstrate that they cared. While over time Alicia established a distance between herself and school, Alicia's reading identity was also not a direct reflection of her home experiences. She did not share books with her friends as her mother did, or share her mother's love of English class. In addition, issues beyond race, schooling, and literacy distinguished Alicia from her mother and siblings. For example, Alicia subscribed to traditional notions of femininity not shared by her mother or sister. Alicia's attention to fulfilling feminine norms was a source of ongoing consternation for her mother. Ms Rodriguez frequently complained that "Alicia is so girly-girly." Quanzaa, with her interests in basketball and hockey, shared more of her mother's interests.

Despite growing up in the same household, each of Alicia's siblings had a unique and recognized role in the family. As Alicia and Ms. Rodriguez explained, Leon was interested in computers, while his brothers preferred music, walking, or sports; Tyreek was the artist; Alicia was "the stepper"; and Quanzaa was the "experience person" who enjoyed activities including sports. While these siblings grew up in the same household, lived in the same neighborhood, and attended the same school system, each developed his or her own identity and role in the family. These differences point to something more than simple reproduction: identity development is a complex process of incorporation and construction; family members may draw on similar resources, but in uniquely different ways.

The influences of school, peers, community, church, and other social groups come together across time in complex ways that challenge, maintain, and extend the ways of being—and specifically being literate—that children experience at home. As McLeod and Yates (2006) explained, "Student subjectivities are formed in interaction with the ethos of the school, which

cultivates dispositions and orientations that may contradict or correspond to the habitus formed in the family" (p. 25). Students, like Alicia, find ways to negotiate these contradictions by drawing on various resources and ways of being that they have encountered across time.

Conclusion

All the African American families in the larger study were not like Alicia's family. They told different stories; some resonated with the counter-stories told by Ms. Rodriguez, others more closely reflected majoritarian accounts (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The families presented different sets of literacy practices. Some were as impressive as those described by Alicia's family; others were harder to recognize and were deeply integrated in the families' everyday life (e.g., cooking, shopping, parenting, health). What was the same across all of the cases in this study was that race, schooling, and literacy converged across time and in people's lives and these convergences were taken up by individuals in unique ways.

In this paper, I have argued that Alicia and her family members accessed resources at historical, familial, and ongoing timescales as they defined themselves as readers and agents in their lives. By attending to timescales, we disrupt conventional, linear, and cumulative notions of time and reveal how students and family members access time in ways that are both recursive and future-oriented as they contribute to the construction of identities. The temporal experiences of students, like Alicia, can help us begin to recognize the ways family histories and the stories that are told and retold within families relate to larger social histories and resonate with or against the educational systems that students experience. By attending to time, we can begin to recognize students as agents who draw upon the resources that are available to them at multiple timescales to make sense of their world and their role in that world in order to construct their identities.

Throughout this paper, we have observed Alicia drawing on information from various timescales: the history of African American people in the United State; the stories of her family members and their school and literacy experiences; and her ongoing experiences and relationships. Identity development is neither an individual project nor the result of a certain set of social influences; it is a combination of both. As Bakhtin (1994) reminded us, the words we use, the practices we adopt, and the identities we claim always half-belong to someone else. Identities are also the result of negotiations, reversals, exchanges, rejections, adoptions, dismissals, and renegotiations as we claim, abandon, and rework the ways of being that are available as we find ourselves in different situations and interacting with different people over time. Different times and situations involve different experiences and stories that we confront, claim, and challenge based on our evolving identities and positionalities.

Likewise, Alicia's literate identity development was not a simple cumulative process. Her attitude towards schoolbooks in high school was not an extension of the excitement she brought to books in first grade. While generally her book choices changed, some books almost inexplicably remained favorites (i.e., the Baby-sitter's Club, Goosebumps). She voiced frustration with teachers but talked with me, her former first-grade teacher, for over 10 years. Identity development is multifaceted and messy. In Alicia's case, it not only referenced the here and now, but pulled recursively on family stories and counter-stories that she accessed individually and collaboratively to make sense of her world. Identity is tied to the future and

people's hopes, fears, and expectations. Identity development also draws on larger histories, including accounts of violation by racism and sexism and other accounts that celebrate the rich literate history of African American people. It is not just the familial counter-stories of race and schooling that are significant; significance lies in the telling and the retelling of these stories and the meanings that they assume.

Longitudinal research has a valuable gift to offer educators and researchers; it allows us to view students and families in rich and nuanced ways. Students and their family members are not simple, static, and easily identified stereotypical sorts of people. The young man who enters a high school classroom wearing a baggy shirt and drooping blue jeans is not only what he appears to be today. He brings a rich bricolage of experiences and insights. He is making sense of his experiences while gathering stories and counter-stories that reflect his own experiences as well as the experiences of his family, peers, and classmates. When I looked at Alicia, I saw not only the talented young person she was becoming, but also the 6-year-old she once was. Sometimes when Alicia smiled, I was transported back to when Alicia was in first grade, or to the "step" demonstration I witnessed when Alicia was in fifth grade, or to the videotaped image of an elegant young woman in a white dress and high heels at her eighth-grade graduation. Majoritarian stories deny the rich histories that children bring to school, the strengths and abilities they possess, and the critiques they have constructed across time. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) named this denial *symbolic violence*; Valenzuela (1999) called it *subtractive schooling*. I worry that not attending to time and the ongoing, familial, and historical timescales that students draw upon denies possibilities for students and contributes to limited understandings on the part of teachers and researchers.

While teachers cannot travel back in time to visit their students at earlier ages, we can recognize students as temporal beings who bring rich sets of experiences and knowledges to our classrooms. Based on Alicia's story, I recommend the following for educators and researchers who want to gain richer understandings of students:

- Listen to the stories and counter-stories told by children and their family members.

- Respect the critiques that students and their family members bring to school and recognize them as genuine, valid, and essential for students who are learning to navigate complex social contexts in school and beyond.

- Offer students literacy experiences and texts that are compatible with the identities that they are constructing.

- Help students find ways to expand their existing range of literacy practices; help them fall in love with new types of texts and literate experiences and/or recognize the ways they can use a range of literacy practices to achieve their goals.

- Be receptive to learning about rich literate practices that students, like Alicia, might be hesitant to reveal in the classroom (e.g., Alicia's poetry and novel reading).

- View student identities as multifaceted and flexible; recognize their potential to take on new interests and identities.

- Remember that we all draw on ongoing, familial, and historical timescale resources as we construct ourselves as readers and as people. Time matters.

This research project provides a powerful example of how long-term longitudinal research can complicate and inform the ways we understand issues of identity, literate identity, and agency for students. Teachers play an important role in recognizing students as people who bring rich histories to their classrooms. Like Alicia and her family, as teachers we draw from a variety of historical, familial, and ongoing timescales. We can tap into historical timescales that identify African American students as people who bring rich literate histories to our classrooms. We can treat our students as people whose lived experiences have provided them with deep, critical, and significant analyses of schooling and society. We can learn about their everyday literate practices and interests, countering majoritarian accounts that deny the histories they and their families bring and focus on what is missing or problematic in relation to test scores, current academic standards, and grade-level expectations. Attention to timescales forces us to attend to what students bring (not just what they can do, but also what they have lived), the social relations that have contributed to their ways of being, and the larger histories in which we all live. As Lemke (2005) reminded us, "We construct meaning of our lives . . . across multiple timescales of action and activity, from the blink of an eye to the work of a lifetime" (p. 110). Our challenge as educators is to recognize and work within this temporal complexity as we support students as literacy learners.

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Appendix: Alicia's Poems

Angel

One day I'm gonna have someone I can hold.
Someone who can be at my side 24/7
Even if I want them to hug me at the 7-11.
I want someone who can kiss me hi and bye.
I want someone who won't hurt me and die.
God, can you give me someone who has skin as soft as a baby.
I want you to give me someone who smells like a daisy.
I want someone who's not fragile.
That someone will be my angel.

Hate

Hey, there's a person that I ain't can't stand.
And they will never be my friend.
Sometimes they can hurt my feelings.
It don't matter because I can always take the hurt away by writing.
No, I can't take the pain.
I'm gonna need a cane cause because I'm gonna break my leg.
Because all of the pain.
That's why this person I will always hate.