

Literacy and Schooling in One Family across Time

Catherine Compton-Lilly
University of Wisconsin Madison

Most research involving the analyses of discourses targets particular points in time or relatively short durations (i.e., one semester, one year). Failure to recognize the ways discourses operate over long periods of time limits the ability of educators and researchers to recognize the temporal nature of meaning construction. Through this longitudinal research project, I tracked discourses about literacy and schooling to document how events at multiple timescales (Lemke, 2000, 2001) converged in the literacy and schooling experiences of one student. Specifically, I asked how one African American middle-school student and members of her family drew upon and negotiated discourses related to past and ongoing experiences as well as larger social histories as they made sense of literacy and schooling. Based on data from an eight-year study, I applied grounded coding methods to identify and track discourses voiced in interview transcripts and field notes. Findings from the study suggest that discourses were taken up, challenged, modified, negotiated, and abandoned by participants across time. Participants drew on multiple, intertextual language resources within families and other social contexts to make sense of themselves and their experiences recursively as they recalled, neglected, revisited, and forgot particular stories and events and identified familiar social types.

When Alicia was in first grade, I asked Ms. Rodriguez why she liked to read. She responded, "It takes you to a different place. It relaxes you" (interview, January 4, 1997). Almost seven years later, Alicia told me, "I just like it [reading]; it can take my mind away from things" (interview, October 12, 2003).

Across nearly seven years, Alicia and her mother used almost identical words to describe reading. The eight-year qualitative study described in this article enabled me to track discourses about reading and schooling within one family. While educational researchers routinely describe the existence of multiple discourses (Bakhtin, 1981; Wortham, 2001), dominant discourses (Fairclough, 1995), and big "D" and little "d" discourses (Gee, 1990), educational researchers have not examined or documented how they operate over time and how they intersect with school trajectories. In addition, researchers have yet to examine how language within families circulates and operates as family members make sense of their experiences.

Most research that involves analyses of discourses targets particular points in time or examines relatively short periods of time (i.e., one semester, one year). However, language is deeply grounded in the past and reflects people's projections of the future (Bakhtin, 1981). Failure to recognize the historically constructed nature of discourses and the ways they operate across time limits the ability of educators and researchers to recognize and examine how students make sense of schooling and literacy experiences.

Recurring discourses, such as the one presented above, are only visible within longitudinal data sets. As Bakhtin (1981) explained, they are constructed, revised, and rejected over time; they have existed in other people's mouths and are loaded with other people's intentions. I define discourses as the habitual ways community members use language to process experiences often involving particular words and phrases across contexts and events. They draw on events that have occurred in the past and act in the service of possible futures, reflecting people's personal pasts as well as collective histories and incorporating ongoing events as people live out lives. While discourses are fundamentally temporal constructs, the specific ways they operate have been neither documented nor examined. Finally, discourses guide children's emerging beliefs about the world and relate to the identities and roles that they assume. By neglecting the temporal nature of discourses, researchers and educators ignore the ways children draw upon available semiotic resources as they position themselves relative to school and literacy.

Through this project, I tracked discourses about reading and schooling to document how events at multiple timescales converged in the literacy and schooling experiences of one student across an eight-year period. Specifically, I asked:

- How did multiple, and sometimes conflicting, discourses related to literacy and schooling operate within one family?
- How were meanings constructed in one family as family members negotiated and drew upon discourses related to past and ongoing experiences as well as historical events?

In order to conceptualize the ways one student, Alicia, drew upon available discourses to define herself as a student and as a literate person, I began by focusing on her mother, Ms. Rodriguez. At the beginning of the study, Ms. Rodriguez was a 34-year-old single African American mother living in a high poverty community with her six children (her Latino surname was from her ex-husband). Ms. Rodriguez was uniquely positioned in the family with regard to time. As an adult, the discourses she adopted referenced not only her own childhood and larger historical accounts but also ongoing events and her hopes for her children; thus, Ms. Rodriguez resided at the center of the contextual analysis that situated Alicia as a literacy learner and student. The words of Ms. Rodriguez provided the basis for the

following familial analysis that involved the re-articulation of multiple discourses. Throughout the study, Ms. Rodriguez, Alicia, Alicia's younger sister, and Alicia's four older brothers evoked discourses that were taken up, voiced, negotiated, and challenged in various ways by individual family members. Alicia was privy to the words and stories of family members as she negotiated among these discourses, her own experiences, and her evolving understandings of larger social histories to make sense of herself and the world.

Time in Educational Research

Time as a concept is consistently implicated in discussions of literacy and schooling. Specifically, it is recognized in at least four ways in educational research: 1) time as a variable in research studies; 2) time within developmental accounts; 3) history as context; and 4) time within people's life stories.

In quantitative research studies, time is often recognized as a variable that can affect methodological decisions and/or the findings of studies. Educational research studies reference time in various forms including the duration of the research studies, the ages of the participants, the intervals between data collection cycles, and as contributing factors, such as the number of years parents spent in school or the amount of time students spend reading or playing video games. For example, Roberts, Jurgens, and Burchinal (2005) examined the extent to which home literacy practices of young children predicted later language and literacy skills. In their study, which followed children from age 18 months through their entry into kindergarten, they treated time as a methodological dimension - the length of their study. In an earlier study, conducted by Leseman and de Jong (1998), children were tracked from age four to age seven to examine relationships between home literacy practices and educational outcomes. Assessments were administered repeatedly at planned intervals to ascertain the stability of established home literacy practices. These studies did not focus explicitly on people's temporal experiences or the ways people constructed meaning via language within temporal contexts.

Time is also implicit in the construct of development. Classic studies in developmental psychology (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1953) have identified stages that children progress through and/or benchmarks that children are expected to meet at particular points in time. The developmental perspective focuses on change over time and the degree to which individual change reflects expected development. Recently, some developmental psychologists have critiqued normative accounts of development. Spencer (1990) argued that these accounts fail to reflect the complexities of development and the "adaptive modes used by both minority parents and their children" (p. 267) to maneuver their sometimes challenging social and educational contexts. As children learn to handle the stressors, they develop adaptive responses that provide opportunities for development. In a similar vein, Mishler

(1999) focused on people's life trajectories and argued for "replacing universality with variability as the central assumption in all human development research" (p. 11). In his work with craft artists, discontinuities, disjunctures, and interruptions were the norm. Both traditional developmental accounts and models that highlight adaptation and variability treat time as a medium that people progress through rather than as a contextual dimension that people draw upon in various ways to make sense of their experiences.

However, within the field of developmental psychology, some researchers attend more explicitly to time. Elder (1994, 1998) recognized the "interplay of human lives and historical times" and the "timing of lives" (1994, p. 5). Elder's longitudinal studies focused on both the experiences of age cohorts that shared a particular historical time and the intergenerational relationships that contributed to socialization. Elder examined the life course, which he defined as an "interweave of age-graded trajectories. . . subject to changing conditions and future options, and to short-term transitions ranging from leaving school to retirement" (1994, p. 5). While Elder recognized the convergence of historical events and social relationships, he did not explicitly address how people drew upon available discourses to make sense of their worlds as they operated within and across time.

Researchers have also contextualized the experiences of participants within social histories and local community histories. For example, critical race theorists (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) critique ahistorical accounts of schooling and argue that current educational practices are deeply rooted in policies, practices, and attitudes of the past. Ladson-Billings (1994) situated her research with successful teachers of African American children within discussions about the historical segregation of African American and White students. She maintained that successful teachers challenged accepted instructional practices, creating new possibilities for students.

Other researchers attend to the local histories of research communities. To contextualize case studies of African American families, I (2007) provided a historical description of the research community. I noted the active role this community played in the Civil Rights Movement and the changes that ensued. This historical contextualization noted the demolition of existing homes, White-flight to the suburbs, the abandonment of the public services from low-income communities, the construction of low-income housing, and the replacement of neighborhood schools with a large elementary school that eventually served over 1200 children. While initial efforts to revitalize the community were directed by community members, city government took control, which eventually led to economic hardship and a lack of community services. Thus, while history has been used to understand both social and local histories that affect the school experiences of children, these studies do not examine how families exist within time and draw on available discourses to make sense of their experiences.

Life story researchers, such as McAdams (2001) and Wortham (2001), argue that people's identities are conceived and expressed as stories that involve reconstructions of past experiences alongside ongoing interactions and anticipated futures. Life stories are continuously constructed and reconstructed within social and cultural contexts. People tell these stories to themselves and others to make sense of their worlds and themselves. Life stories are retrospective. While life story researchers recognize the social nature of story telling and the cultural contexts in which people live, they do not focus on how people exist and operate within time, the ways lives are situated within social institutions, society and history, or the multiple discourses that people encounter and use within various contexts.

Educational research implicitly recognizes time by treating time as a variable, documenting developmental processes, recognizing the role of history in communities, and capturing people's life stories. While these theoretical and empirical research studies reference time, they do not directly address time as a contextual factor that affects the ways people make sense of their lives. In this study, I drew upon a longitudinal data set that allowed me to attend to time as a contextualizing factor that was relevant to the meanings families and students brought to literacy and schooling. I placed time at the center of this discussion of literacy and schooling to document the ways people accessed discursive resources across time to make sense of themselves and their worlds.

Social Semiotics across Time

Semiotics is the study of signs and their meanings. Social semioticians examine how people use signs, including language, to make sense of their worlds. Built upon the work of Saussure (1959), Voloshinov (1929), Pierce (1940/65), and Halliday (1978), contemporary social semioticians argue that all meanings involve other people, past experiences, and intertextual resources (Lemke, 1995). Lemke described discourse as the "social activity of making meanings with language and other symbolic systems" (Lemke, 1995, p. 6). Meaning construction is not an individual act. People consistently draw upon existing discourses, activities, other people, literacy, and schooling to make sense of their worlds. As Bakhtin (1981) maintained in his analysis of novels, all interactions occur within longitudinal streams of interaction; the meanings people attribute to events in the present rely on those constructed in the past. Discourses typically convey relatively stable understandings that change gradually. Some reflect common sense; they circulate widely and are rarely interrogated or challenged. They tend to support existing social structures and relations of power (Fairclough, 1995). Others reflect the interests of local communities and challenge status quo beliefs about the world. Thus, all people and all interactions occur within complex heteroglossic fields (Bakhtin, 1981) that are characterized by multiple and often contradictory ways of making sense of the world alongside intertextuality - reading particular texts against the background of other texts and experiences (Lemke, 1995).

According to Lemke, “The language others speak to us, from childhood, shapes the attitudes and beliefs that ground how we use all our powers of action” (1995, p. 1). Individual voices are fashioned out of available social resources as people appropriate multiple discourses to serve their own purposes and make sense of their worlds. Similarly, according to Bakhtin (1981), “The word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language. . . but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, and in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions” (p. 293-294).

While traditional accounts locate understanding within the minds of individuals, social semioticians recognize meaning construction as a socially and historically mediated process that draws on existing explanations of the world. Events at micro levels are interpreted through references to available texts, existing discourses, and semiotic formations, as well as how they respond to and operate within macrosystems including institutions, organizations, traditions, and conventions. Meanings are grounded in ongoing experiences, constrained by institutions, practices, and policies, and continuously negotiated. Shared discourses contribute to “persistent habits of speaking and acting” (Lemke, 1995, p. 24) that are characteristic of particular social groups and contribute to shared worldviews, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes within families, communities, social classes, and cultural groups while allowing for dissent and negotiation.

Methods

According to Saldaña (2003), “. . . longitudinal research means a *lonnnnnnnng* time” (p. 1). In his view, this research helps researchers view the breadth and depth of people’s life experiences and document change by analyzing data collected through long-term observations of actors and their perspectives. The current case study is part of a collective case study that involved eight students and their families over an eight-year period. The “periodic restudy” (Saldaña, 2003) of the families, in contrast to continuous data collection, enabled me to follow the families for a significant period without becoming overly intrusive or producing unmanageable amounts of data.

I began the collective case study as a one-year study when I was the first-grade teacher of Alicia and her classmates. Contact with the families was maintained by obtaining current contact information from the school district, visiting past home addresses, contacting parents at work, and in one case literally running into a parent who had moved out of the school district. The families participated in the study during the children’s first-grade, fourth/fifth-grade, and seventh/eighth-grade years. Table 1 depicts a timeline for the project, noting when each phase of the project occurred, the number of students, students’ grade levels, and the number of interviews conducted during each phase. Details of the first two phases of the full study have been reported in two books (Compton-Lilly, 2003,

2007). This analysis involved a phenomenological search for lines of meaning that were salient to participants (Garfinkel, 1967; Marton, 1986).

The Research Setting

During the initial study, I used a convenience sampling procedure to select families from my first-grade class. I started at the top of my class list and contacted parents in alphabetical order inviting them to participate; all contacted parents

TABLE 1: Research Phases, Participants, Data and Analysis

Phase	Data	Analysis
Phase 1 Grade 1 1996-1997	4 Parent interviews 4 Student interviews Fieldnotes Portfolio/classroom assessments Classroom discussions	Coding across studies
1997-1998	No data was collected	
1998-1999	No data was collected	
1999-2000	No data was collected	
Phase 2 Grade 5 2000-2001	2 Parent interviews 2 Student interviews Reading assessments Writing samples	Case study development
2001-2002	No data was collected	
2002-2003	No data was collected	
Phase 3 Grade 8 2003-2004	2 Parent interviews 2 Student interviews Reading assessments Writing samples	Coding across studies
2004-2005	No data was collected	
2005-2006	No data was collected	
Phase 4 Grade 11 2006-2007	3 Parent interviews 3 Student interviews Reading assessments Writing samples School observations Teacher interviews Student-created writing, photos, audio-tapes journals, and/or drawings	Case study development

agreed to participate. In first grade, the students attended Rosa Parks Elementary School where 97% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The city in which the school was located continues to struggle with unemployment, substandard housing, a lack of quality physical and mental health care, the closing of local libraries, gang violence, and a proliferation of illegal businesses, including drug trafficking. Despite these challenges, participants in this study demonstrated remarkable resiliency and maintained faith in their children. By middle school, eight students from the original sample remained in the study and attended schools across the district; two moved out of the school district and could not be located.

Participants

Ms. Rodriguez was a single mother of six children - four older sons (Tyreek, Leon, James, and P.T.) and two daughters (Alicia and her younger sister Quanzaa). Leon, James, and P.T. were in high school; Tyreek was in middle school when the project commenced. Alicia was a six-year-old student in my first-grade class. While the issues examined in this article were relevant to all the cases, the propensity of Ms. Rodriguez and her children to speak forcefully about a range of issues that included sensitive topics (i.e., race, class), Ms. Rodriguez's extensive experiences with schooling gained through raising her four boys, and the tendency for various family members to interject their thoughts and ideas into the interviews contributed to an extensive and multi-voiced data set which allowed me to track discourses within the family.

Data Collection

Initially, I was interested in the concepts about reading held by first-grade students and their families. While literacy remained the focus of the research, across the research phases the scope of the research broadened in response to children's and parents' comments about school, teachers, and their goals for the future. The full study included a range of data sources including: interviews, classroom observations, field notes, reading assessments, state test scores, and writing samples (see Table 1). Multiple data sources allowed for triangulation and were critical considering the complexity and the situated nature of participants' experiences. Interviews captured participants' perspectives and often revealed the discourses that they drew upon to make sense of reading, schooling, and selves. The case study presented here relies primarily on interviews and field notes that were recorded during and immediately following the interview sessions. Interviews with parents lasted approximately 60 minutes; early interviews with children were shorter, lasting approximately 20 minutes—as the children grew older their interviews grew longer eventually lasting approximately one hour.

Throughout the study, Ms. Rodriguez was invited to discuss her childhood experiences with learning to read, reading ability, school experiences, reading and writing practices, opinions about literacy and technology, satisfaction with her

children's school experiences, hopes for her children, and the literacy practices she shared with her children. In elementary school, Alicia was asked about her experiences at home and school with reading and writing, learning to read, book preferences, experiences with computers, and plans for the future. In middle school, she was also asked about her favorite classes, teachers, friends, and interests outside of school. With the exception of Alicia's initial interviews that occurred at school and her fifth-grade interviews that were conducted at a local fast food restaurant, all interviews occurred in the Rodriguez home. Interviews were audiotaped and detailed written notes were recorded.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved three separate and lengthy processes of transcription, coding, and analysis that spanned the three phases of the study. The same general procedures were used during each phase of the study. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I used data analysis programs, first Hyperqual and later Nvivo, to sort segments of interview data into code sets based on patterns that were suggested by multiple readings of the transcripts. Initial code sets were supplemented, expanded, condensed, combined, and abandoned as additional interviews were coded and as data sources were added to the data set. Transcripts coded early in the analysis process were revisited during later stages of analysis to reflect the revised codebook. Once interviews were coded, I conducted a close reading of the existing categories and again revised, condensed, and combined these categories. I combined code sets that were similar or re-sorted data from particularly large code sets to reflect more specific issues. Finally, I clustered the code sets around shared themes as I identified larger, more salient themes related to my research questions.

Data coding for each phase of the project followed the general process described above with one difference: during phases one and three, I coded data across the entire data set. During the second phase, I coded the data from each family separately and constructed case summaries for each family prior to identifying inter-case patterns. This process of moving back and forth between the identification of general analytical categories and case study analyses provided a balance between identifying inter-case themes and attending to dimensions of individual cases. While the third phase analysis initially involved cross-case coding, I have opted for a case study approach in this article due to the complexity of tracking discourses across time.

As data were coded from each phase of the study, a chart was crafted to link similar themes throughout the research project. Table 2 notes a sampling of codes from across the longitudinal study. Although similar research interests and interview questions contributed to a degree of consistency in coding, each round of coding was conducted separately and new sets of grounded codes were identified during each phase of the research project to ensure that the codes reflected each phase of data.

TABLE 2: A Sampling of Related Codes from Each Phase of the Research Project

Longitudinal Themes	Grade 1 Codes	Grades 4/5 Codes	Grades 7/8 Codes
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move – comments about moving out of the local community. - Community – comments about the community, neighbors, and local resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context - Home – comments made by participants about their homes. - Community – comments made by participants about their community. - System – comments made by participants about “the system” (i.e., institutions and policies that affect their lives). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood – comments made by participants about their community, neighborhood, and resources.
Reading Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Reading - Books – comments related to reading book, often for enjoyment. - Making it – comments that connected reading ability with “making it” in life; obtaining a sustainable lifestyle. - Employment – comments that associated reading with getting a job. - Information – comments that related reading to obtaining information. - Learn – comments that connected reading with a generic notion of learning. - Survive – comments that associated reading with survival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality – comments related to the quality of participants’ literacy experiences. - Role – comments related to the various roles reading played in people’s lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child reading - Attitude – comments about the child’s affect/attitude toward reading - Practices – comments about the child’s reading practices - Achievement – comments about the child’s reading achievement - Not books – comments about reading activities that child engaged in that did not involve books. - School reading – comments about the child’s reading of school-assigned texts

- Indicates a code identified through a grounding coding process.

• Indicates a second level axial/tree code created later in the coding process to organize categories of data.

As I coded data from phase three, the longitudinal nature of the research project prompted me to attend to the ways participants, their literacy practices, and their schooling experiences were contextualized within time. During this phase of analysis, a set of codes related to time (see Table 3) was identified. However, my temporal analysis involved more than coding and categorization. Some accounts

from the past were recounted during multiple interviews (i.e., repeated descriptions of a favorite teacher; reiterated comments about a particular book). In other cases, participants offered particular stories as examples of larger recurring patterns. These accounts were coded under “time” and often marked linguistically and temporally with words such as “mostly,” “all the time,” or “for every little thing.” As I reviewed the data coded in temporal categories (“time,” “now and then,” “future,” “change”), I noted the reoccurrence of both temporal language and repeated accounts of events. My familiarity with the data set led me to identify sets of recurring discourses and to revisit transcripts to further document these recurrences.

While I have attended to discourses voiced by participants since the inception of the project (Compton-Lilly, 2003, 2007), the longitudinal nature of the project led me to document their circulation. A simplified model of timescales was applied to capture the ways Alicia and her family members accessed discourses grounded in multiple timescales to make sense of their experiences.

Historical Timescales

Historical timescales reference historic accounts of people and events that are known to participants with various degrees of specificity. While participants did not recount textbook-style details of these histories, they brought general understandings that have been conveyed through the media, school experiences, family stories, and shared cultural knowledge. Not only were people recipients of these historical discourses, they were also actors within historicized contexts.

TABLE 3: Phase Three Codes Related to Time

Codes	Examples
Time: comments that reference time; particularly the past or the passing of time	Ms. Rodriguez described her mother helping her to learn to read as a child. Alicia recounted her experiences in first grade several years later.
Now and then: comments, generally made by parents, that compare children’s and adults’ experiences	Ms. Rodriguez compared the teachers she had in school with her children’s teachers.
Future: comments that reference possible futures	Ms. Rodriguez shared her hopes for Alicia’s future. Alicia described her dream to become a photographer.
Change: comments that reference situations or people that have changed or stayed the same over time	Ms. Rodriguez described how her former neighborhood changed forcing her to relocate to a new home/neighborhood. Alicia explained that her friends in middle school were generally the same kids who attended Rosa Parks Elementary School.

Familial Timescales

Familial timescales reference the personal experiences of family members and the ways understandings of these experiences circulate within families. Familial timescales included accounts and discourses that supported, exposed, and challenged generally accepted understandings of the world.

Ongoing Timescales

Ongoing timescales referenced activities that occurred during recent weeks and months in a loosely defined present as well as the socially informed meanings participants shared as they make sense of these events. While ongoing timescales were recognized as operating throughout the research project, due to limits of space, they are not dealt with extensively in this article.

Researcher Discourses

As a researcher, I also drew across multiple timescales to make sense of my experiences and the data I collected. As an academic negotiating the tenure track, I have consciously adhered to historically and socially constructed expectations related to academic writing, struggled to develop my arguments in ways that are valued within the academic community, and conformed to accepted writing conventions. Academic discourses, like all others, have their own “cannons of intertextuality . . . regarding which texts are most relevant to the interpretation of any one text” (Lemke, 1995, p. 36).

My past teaching experiences have also contributed to the ways I made sense of my data. While teaching in the same community for over 15 years, I was privy to the discourses imposed on poor, inner-city, African American parents that often characterized parents as illiterate and uninterested in their children’s school experiences. However, in my teaching and through my research, I witnessed agency, resilience, and struggle as I became interested in the nuances and complexities of people’s experiences.

In addition, complexities of my personal life story intersected with my research. Growing up in an academically oriented family that struggled at the poverty line caused me to continually question discourses that identified education as the key to the American Dream. In my family, education was not a simple solution to economic hardship. Thus, what I research, how I conduct research, and how I write about my research are all intricately connected to my own past experiences. Like the participants in this project, I draw upon multiple timescales that unavoidably define and limit available meanings.

Finally, it is notable that my own understandings of the data have changed during the course of the project. In elementary school (Compton-Lilly, 2007), I presented Alicia as an example of a successful student; by the third phase of the research project, this characterization was complicated by multiple school-related

factors despite her continued interest in reading. In addition, events that I originally understood as isolated incidents, I now recognize as links in chains of events that reflect meanings that have evolved among participants and across situations.

Findings

In contrast to much educational research, this study does not present a slice of time. Instead, it examines the ways people access multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses across time to understand themselves and others. Specifically, I examine the ways family members drew upon discourses and utilized them for their own purposes as they made sense of their worlds. These discourses are illustrative and there are assuredly a myriad of others that I have not documented. In the following analyses, I am not interested in the accuracy of the accounts provided by the family and do not explore the degree to which their accounts are justified; I focus on the meanings Ms. Rodriguez and her children bring to their worlds over time. I identify temporal discourses associated with space, school, and literacy followed by a description of Alicia's literacy practices.

Temporal Discourses Associated with Space

Spaces are constructed and occupied over time, and the meanings associated with these spaces are conveyed, in part, by the words used to characterize these spaces. During the 1960s, a series of race riots occurred in the neighborhoods surrounding Rosa Parks Elementary School. Entire blocks of homes were burned and eventually replaced by housing projects. Both European immigrant families and African American families had lived in the neighborhood prior to the riots. After the riots, most of the European immigrant families left the community; the remaining African American families were joined by families from Puerto Rico. While this history preceded Ms. Rodriguez's relocation to this community, the legacy of the past continued to affect daily life for residents. Housing projects and a bottling distribution plant bordered Rosa Parks Elementary School. Few White people lived in this segregated part of the city, and over 1200 African American, biracial, and Puerto Rican children attended the school with fewer than a dozen White classmates. Ms. Rodriguez and her family lived in a house that had been converted into rental apartments three blocks from the school.

This history informed the meanings Ms. Rodriguez attributed to her children's teachers. The following account reflected Ms. Rodriguez's concerns:

A lot of teachers in a lot of schools. . . say this is the ghetto, right? And they say a lot of people is in the ghetto 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 (interview, April 29, 1997).

In Ms. Rodriguez's account, teachers recognized the community as a "ghetto" and thus made assumptions about families being on welfare and not caring about their children. The term "ghetto" carries history. Decades ago, it was used to refer to segregated parts of European cities that housed Jewish people before and during the Holocaust. In America, the word "ghetto" was used extensively during the civil rights era to identify segregated parts of cities that housed African American people and other economically struggling social and cultural groups.

Three years later, Ms. Rodriguez again reflected on the assumptions school personnel made about children from the neighborhood. In the following example, she drew across time and space, referencing her own high school experiences in New York City:

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 [in the city where the research was conducted], 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 (interview, September 6, 2000).

Ms. Rodriguez's accounts not only referenced the historical ghettoization of the community but also illustrated how historically constructed meanings related to space were inscribed upon people. Her words described how teachers' discourses depicted communities and their residents in particular ways, inscribing residents with particular attributes.

Ms. Rodriguez frames slipping through school as a systemic problem that occurred decades ago in New York City and currently in her children's schools. Agency was central to her accounts. Throughout the interviews, Ms. Rodriguez described the importance of letting school personnel know that "you do care." She often returned to this theme, connecting it to race and describing the actions that she took to distinguish herself from other parents:

Ms. Rodriguez: [You have to] write letters, show up at school meetings and talk to the teachers" (interview, September 6, 2000).

Ms. Rodriguez: They figured most young Black people are either out there selling drugs or doing drugs and they think because you live in the ghetto, you got to act like the ghetto. But that's not true (interview, February 1, 2001).

Ms. Rodriguez: They 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 (interview, February 1, 2001).

Ms. Rodriguez: Yeah, they do it [make assumption] *all* the time to all of us (interview, February 1, 2001).

Ms. Rodriguez: I am so happy that they know how to read cause I refuse to let them push them [my children] through school" (interview, October 12, 2003).

Ms. Rodriguez's personal history and memories of school are alive in her words and actions. The actions she took on behalf of her children were embedded in time reflecting both her own high school experiences and her hopes for her children's futures. In addition, Ms. Rodriguez named and challenged the inscription of place, "the ghetto," on people. She identified discourses that circulated widely about urban parents and youth, and she named race (i.e., "Black kids") as relevant. Ms. Rodriguez used the pronouns "they" and "them" to refer to teachers and other school personnel alongside the word "you" as she advocated agency to me and an implied audience of peers, maintaining that "you got to" and "you have to" advocate for your children.

Not only did time operate through discourses that drew on history and memory, but tensions were also evident in the ongoing juxtaposition of conflicting messages. As described above, Ms. Rodriguez complained about school personnel who described the community as a "ghetto" and made assumptions about families; however, Ms. Rodriguez repeatedly voiced similar negative beliefs about other parents in her community.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: You got kids, babies having babies now. And they don't even know how to help teach their kids.

JAKE: That's not all the problem. They [kids in the suburbs] got, they got better school than them [the kids in the city] . . .

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, but you got babies having babies Jake. You got little kids having little kids and then if they don't know, they done drop out in sixth, fifth, sixth grade how would you expect them to teach their kids (interview, July 11, 2004).

Ms. Rodriguez voiced these negative discourses throughout the interviews, often within minutes of critiquing teachers for their assumptions. Tensions were evident in interactions with family members. In the example above, her son, Jake, drew on his recent experiences in high school, challenging his mother's account of parents and naming school quality as the problem.

The spaces Ms. Rodriguez and her family members inhabited existed within particular histories. Family members were both positioned by discourses and accessed them as they engaged in complex identity work and the othering of both school personnel and other parents. Their words were deeply connected to the physical spaces they occupied and informed by prior experiences in high school as

well as meanings related to historical timescales that reference segregation, ghetto communities, inferior urban schools, and race.

Temporality and School Discourses

As described above, Ms. Rodriguez distinguished herself from other parents whom she characterized as fulfilling a particular social type—urban parents who did not care about their children. Discourses related to social types were apparent throughout the data and particularly in relation to teachers. At various points in the study, participants used almost identical language to describe teachers. Ms. Rodriguez, Alicia, and Leon all described teachers as uncaring:

Leon: Teachers don't care. I know the teachers at Coolidge don't (interview, September 6, 2000).

Ms. Rodriguez: Teachers seem [like] when I was coming up that they care. Now they seem like they just there for a paycheck (interview, February 1, 2001).

Ms. Rodriguez: They [teachers] just don't listen to the kids (interview, October 12, 2003).

Alicia: They should change the ways the teachers act. . .like to help the kids more and to do their job (interview, October 12, 2003).

Ms. Rodriguez: It's like the teacher was there to teach [when I was growing up] and not just get her paycheck (interview, July 11, 2004).

Similar language was used (i.e., “care,” “paycheck,” “do their job”) and a similar message was expressed—teachers do not care about their students and they are not fulfilling their roles as teachers. Ms. Rodriguez repeatedly compared her children's teachers to the teachers she had when she “was coming up.” These “then and now” comparisons reference time as Ms. Rodriguez drew upon past experiences to present her understandings about teachers.

While in early interviews Alicia reported that she enjoyed school and liked her teachers, over time she became less enthusiastic. In fifth grade, she described her teacher as getting on her nerves, making her mad, and yelling “for no reason” (interview, February 1, 2001). Three years later, her younger sister Quanzaa spoke about the teachers at her elementary school: “Instead of the teachers yell[ing] at the kids, the kids yell at the teachers. . . she [the teacher] get on my nerves” (interview, October 12, 2003). Once again, circulating discourses about teachers contributed to the ways both Alicia and her sister made sense of school.

Alicia was not enthusiastic about her teachers in seventh grade, describing one as “alright” and another as “mean.” In eighth grade, she described adversarial scenarios between her teachers and classmates:

The teachers don't, [they] act like they don't like the kids or they scared of them. . . . 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 (interview, October 12, 2003).

Like her mother, brother, and sister, Alicia ascribed particular ways of thinking and acting to teachers.

However, just as Ms. Rodriguez simultaneously critiqued teachers for imposing deficit discourses on her while inscribing these same assumptions on other parents, family members often contradicted their critiques of teachers by recognizing good teachers. Both Alicia and her mother liked Alicia's fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Jefferson. Alicia used the word "ghetto" to describe this African American teacher, explaining for my benefit that in this context "ghetto" meant "cool." She explained that Ms. Jefferson allowed the students to have "Friday Fun" when they could listen to music, dance, and "do anything" they wanted. In eighth grade, Alicia reported that another teacher, Ms. Mavis, was "nice and she don't be mean" (interview, October 12, 2003). In the final interview, she spoke enthusiastically about her school principal whom she described as "cool" and "nice" saying, "she take care of the school" (interview, July 11, 2004). Unlike the teachers critiqued above, these educators were described as caring and fulfilling their job responsibilities.

In some cases, family members accessed traditional discourses to make sense of their experiences. Family members evoked the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—at multiple points in time to describe relationships with teachers and other authority figures. Ms. Rodriguez spoke about her children's teachers:

They want the respect from the kids, but they don't want to give that respect. So they want to talk to you all [addressing her children who were in the room] any kind of way and then expect you all to sit back and say, "Okay," and then you got to be [okay with that]. Kids that are practically grown, that is looking at you like, "My Mama don't talk to me like that" (interview, February 1, 2001).

During that interview, Leon described an incident of police profiling using similar language in his demand to be treated fairly by an authority figure:

So you can put me in the cop car if you want to. I'm gonna treat you like you're treating me. You're treating me like a little kid. So I'm going to treat ya'll like one. It doesn't matter to me (interview, February 1, 2001).

Three years later, Alicia echoed the words of her mother, "They [teachers] should be respectful if they want the kids to be respectful to them" (interview, October 12, 2003). That same school year, Alicia reported that whether she was polite to her teacher depended 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" (interview,

July 11, 2004). Across time, Ms. Rodriguez, Alicia, and Leon all accessed discourses of fairness placing the onus of their actions on authority figures and presenting their own actions as warranted.

In another example of invoking traditional discourses, both Ms. Rodriguez and Alicia characterized some people as not being readers or not being into school. When I asked Ms. Rodriguez why some people never learned to read, she explained, "A lot of them just figured school wasn't for them. They just dropped out" (interview, March 11, 1997). Eight years later when I asked Alicia why she thought that the kids at school did not like to read, she told me, "Cause they just not into it" (interview, July 11, 2004). Both Ms. Rodriguez and Alicia argued that schooling and reading were not for everyone and that the existence of non-academic social types explained their school failure.

Alicia's re-articulations of the words of her mother involved more than simple transferences of traditional attitudes and beliefs from mother to child. Both mother and child drew on previously existing discourses that referenced taken-for-granted, commonsense meanings related to school and literacy that circulated widely and were rarely questioned (Fairclough, 1995). Statements about school not being "for some people" and "some people just aren't into it [school]" were not unique to the mouths of Ms. Rodriguez and Alicia; they were spoken by other people in other contexts (Bakhtin, 1981).

Discourses that claim "school isn't for some people" are particularly problematic. They support the status quo by presenting school failure as an individual problem grounded in some people's intrinsic predilection to not succeed in school and relieving schools of their responsibility to educate all students. This is particularly problematic when members of some cultural, racial, and socioeconomic groups are historically over-represented among the people outside the purview of school despire rhetoric that professes to "leave no child behind."

Throughout these accounts, Ms. Rodriguez and her children voiced discourses about school and teachers that circulated within this family. Some drew on historical timescales referencing traditional adages about race, fairness, and authority; others reflected familial timescales invoking connections to past experiences of family members. In some cases family members contradicted the same discourses they voiced. Uncaring parents were described alongside those who do care, critiques of teachers and schools were presented despite alternate explanations that identified social types who did not resonate with schooling, and fairness was presented as a possibility for authority figures. In addition, Ms. Rodriguez and her children distinguished themselves from other social types by identifying boundaries between themselves, other community members, and teachers.

Literacy Discourses across Time

Throughout the study, Ms. Rodriguez and other family members voiced a range of discourses related to literacy. Ms. Rodriguez consistently identified herself as

an avid reader and a “bookworm,” saying, “Yeah, if it is a good book. I can read that bad boy in one day. I don’t like to put it down” (interview, February 1, 2001). The role of time in the construction of meanings related to literacy was apparent when Ms. Rodriguez traced her love of reading to her mother; she laughed as she reminisced:

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 (interview, January 4, 1997).

Reading was a shared social practice for Mr. Rodriguez. As she explained “All of my friends are good readers. . . We like to trade [books]” (interview, June 26, 1997). She laughed and recreated an animated conversation with a friend:

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 (interview, June 26, 1997).

Ms. Rodriguez’s account of sharing books with her friends was enacted for me and for her children who were present during the interview. Not only did she invoke discourses related to friendship, exchanging books, and enthusiasm for reading but also she enacted joy and her affiliation with other readers. Reading was not just a marker of self; it was a marker of affiliation. “All” of her friends were “good readers.” Affiliation was evident in Ms. Rodriguez’s description of reading *Mama* (McMillan, 1987), a book she had borrowed from a friend:

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 “Roneta, no, uh-uh. She don’t remind you of me. Home girl [the main character in the story] is a whore.” [Roneta responded] “No, I am talking she got five kids.” I am like “Oh okay. That part, yeah, but you know, a whore?” (interview, September 6, 2000).

Ms. Rodriguez accepted the identity as a single mother with a large family, but rejected other characterizations. Three years later, she spoke again about reading *Mama* and rearticulated her affiliation with the book’s protagonist:

Ohhh, that [book] was good. . . when I read it I was like, this book reminds me of me . . . This woman got five kids and [is] struggling, and she's all on her own. I got six. I got more than she do' (interview, October 12, 2003).

These two accounts of reading *Mama* occurred three years apart, testifying to the personal significance of this text; race, gender, single motherhood, and social class were points of affiliation.

Not only did this account describe a book that was important to Ms. Rodriguez, but it was also an enactment of identification and affiliation that her children witnessed over time. This example, along with other accounts, suggested that identification with characters involved race. In addition to reading books by Terry McMillan, Ms. Rodriguez identified the African American writer Donald Goines (i.e., 1973) as her favorite—"He is a Black author. . . .He write about his life" (interview, February 1, 2001). The connection between books and race extended to her children and Ms. Rodriguez's book sharing practices extended to her children. Leon read *Mama* after his mother finished. During Alicia's fifth-grade year, Tyreek brought a biography of Martin Luther King home from school, and although Ms. Rodriguez rarely read to the girls once they were competent readers, she read this book to Alicia and Quanzaa. While Leon and Tyreek enjoyed novels, including the ones they read at school, their brothers primarily read magazines that featured African American athletes and musicians (i.e., *Sports Illustrated* and popular music magazines). While race alone did not fully explain the reading choices of family members and other types of texts were mentioned (i.e., *Babysitters Club Series*, *Goosebumps*, Shakespeare), most of the texts identified by Ms. Rodriguez and her children featured African American characters.

Throughout the eight-year study, Ms. Rodriguez noted her role in helping her children learn to read and become avid 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]" (interview, June 26, 1997). Not only did Ms. Rodriguez reference a particular social type of child—a child who "wanted to read"—but she also identified herself as a critical agent helping her children become readers, "if [you] want to make a child read just give them something that they like to read" (interview, March 11, 1997). This construction of social types who read books was consistent with arguments presented earlier that described other people as "just not into it [reading]."

On my first visit to Alicia's home, Ms. Rodriguez showed me a huge, appliance-sized-box of books that she had been collecting for over ten years. The books were obviously well-used, and the entire family gathered around to view the books. Inside were board books, Little Golden Books, Dr. Seuss Books, discarded library books, and old school textbooks; many of the books were old and tattered. At his mother's request, Tyreek brought out twenty books from his bedroom and exchanged them

for books from the box. Thirteen-year-old Leon asked for all the Dr. Seuss books. Ms. Rodriguez said, “No,” and explained that he was too old for Dr. Seuss. Another older brother, P.T. got his social studies textbook and offered it to Tyreek. Tyreek accepted the book readily. As Tyreek returned the box to the back room, Ms. Rodriguez noted that there was a second box just like it (fieldnotes, January 4, 1997).

The contents of these boxes and the children’s reaction to the books attested to the significance of reading in this household. Not only did the books in this box circulate through the family, but textbooks and other books brought home from school did as well. Alicia, Tyreek, and Quanzaa exchanged books from the *Goosebumps* Series (Stine, 1992-1997). Leon even telephoned his mother’s friend when he needed more books. In this family, reading was a shared social practice and sharing occurred among individual family members in various ways ranging from exchanging books to sharing magazines and textbooks.

Helping younger children learn to read was another shared literacy practice:

Ms. Rodriguez: When she’s [Alicia’s] reading along, she comes to me. And if she don’t come to me she goes to one of her brothers [for help]” (interview, January 4, 1997).

Ms. Rodriguez: I believe if they didn’t have their support of their brothers and their family, I don’t think they would do as well [with reading]” (interview, September 6, 2000).

Ms. Rodriguez: [Addressing Alicia and Quanzaa] You have people [to help you with reading]” (interview, February 1, 2001).

In support of her mother’s claims, as a first grader, Alicia assured me that she planned to help Quanzaa learn to read when she entered kindergarten.

The data presented above reveal the discourses, practices, and meanings that circulated within this family relative to literacy. Literacy was repeatedly described and enacted as an enjoyable shared activity. Ms. Rodriguez’s mother taught her to read just as she taught her own children and they read with their siblings. When Ms. Rodriguez’s children were little, books circulated from the box in the back room and books continued to circulate among Ms. Rodriguez, her children, and close friends as the children grew older. In addition, Ms. Rodriguez’s reading practices reflected the significance of race and gender. This affiliation was taken up differently by the children as they chose novels, biographies of famous African Americans, and magazines that featured African American athletes and musicians. Thus, historical timescales involving race and gender intermingled with familial timescales related to shared literacy practices; family members drew across these timescales as they enacted literacy practices in their daily lives.

Alicia’s Discourses and Literacy Practices across Time

Across the eight-year study, Alicia’s social interests were always apparent. In my field notes from first grade, I described Alicia reading with her friends:

She is a leader in the classroom and generally spends her independent reading time at a table with three other girls reading books together. When they finish, they get up as a group and select a new title bringing it back to their table and reading it chorally. (fieldnotes, January 2, 1997)

Alicia's social nature was often a point of contention between Alicia and her mother:

ALICIA: Well, cause I'm getting a better reader because I don't [talk a lot], I just talk a little and then read. That's why (interview, May 2, 1997).

Ms. RODRIGUEZ: She just got to stop running her mouth. . . . Alicia always been talkative (interview, February 1, 2001)

Ms. RODRIGUEZ: Her teacher said that she knows Alicia is a very capable young lady, but she likes to run her mouth from a "B" to a "C+" (interview, February 1, 2001).

Ms. RODRIGUEZ: I'm getting ready for the middle of the year when she gets to know everybody, and she starts talking a lot. I want to see how that go (interview, October 12, 2003).

Ms. RODRIGUEZ: She talks too much. She ain't going to get nothing done (interview, October 12, 2003).

Over time, Alicia was constructed as talkative and social. However, as Alicia moved through school there were fewer and fewer references to Alicia engaging with friends around literacy. In fifth grade, Alicia excitedly described collaborating with her classmates to write scenes for a play. While at one point in the eighth-grade interviews Alicia said she sometimes read magazines with her friends, she later reported, "We don't read nothing" (interview, July 11, 2004). Unlike her mother, reading books was not an act of affiliation for Alicia. She described her favorite activities as chatting with her friends on the Internet, visiting websites, and singing and stepping with her friends. Alicia's social interests and school reading practices had separated.

Alicia's interest in school books also changed. When I asked what her favorite books were in first grade, Alicia quickly responded, "school books" and named titles from our classroom library; while Alicia may have been trying to please me with this response as I was her first grade teacher, by fifth grade she was no longer concerned with pleasing me. When asked about favorite school books, she answered, "none" (interview, September 6, 2000) explaining that she did not like any of the books that had been assigned by her teachers. Alicia and I discussed some of these books; she named *There's an Owl in the Shower* (George, 1997) and *The Cry of the Crow* (George, 1988). When pressed she identified *Two Under Par* (Henke, 2005) as her favorite. However, when asked about the story, Alicia responded, "I don't know," and in response to my questions recalled only the opening scene of the book.

In eighth grade, Alicia read the *Tell Tale Heart* (Poe, 1983) for English class. Based on her interest in the *Goosebumps* series (Stine, 1992-1997), I anticipated her enjoying this text. She surprised me by complaining that the book was “kinda boring” and “ain’t scary.” When I asked her why she thought *Tell Tale Heart* was boring, Alicia clarified her response, “I think the story ain’t boring, I just think the way my teacher reads it [is boring]” (interview, October 12, 2003). All the schoolbooks Alicia mentioned involved White protagonists.

Despite Alicia’s growing dissatisfaction with school texts, Ms. Rodriguez reported, “Alicia can read her little tail off” and explained that the “last time we checked her reading we was on tenth-grade level” (interview, July 11, 2004). Ms. Rodriguez described Alicia as a “real reader” and noted that Alicia also wrote poetry. When asked to read one of her poems into my tape recorder, Alicia readily agreed disappearing into her room returning with a tattered notebook (see Appendix A). Alicia explained that she wrote these poems while she was visiting her brother in Virginia and denied learning to write poetry in school. Despite these literate accomplishments, Alicia earned a “D” in English in eighth grade.

Alicia’s preferences for books featuring African American characters sedimented over time. In fifth grade, her favorite books were from the “*Babysitters Club*” series (Martin & Lerangris, 1986-2000). When I asked her if there were Black characters in the books, she noted some minor characters but could not remember their names. When asked if it was important that books have Black characters, Alicia shook her head. While she denied the importance of race, she simultaneously spoke enthusiastically about reading a biography of David Robinson, an African American basketball player.

By eighth grade, Alicia’s book preferences reflected more than her racial identity—they also reflected her identity as a young woman. Ms. Rodriguez reported that Alicia was reading “those novel things—love novels” (interview, October 12, 2003); she asked Alicia to show me her most recent book. Alicia emerged from her bedroom with a book about an African American teenager entitled *Ruby* (Guy, 1991). She had “stole” the book from Leon who had borrowed the book from the local library. Alicia explained that that she generally got her books from her mother who got the books from friends, “then I take them and I read them” (interview, July 11, 2004). She also mentioned borrowing a book about “virgins” from the lady next door. Alicia explained that these were “grown-up books. . . mostly about sex” (interview, July 11, 2004). While Alicia’s reading preferences had expanded, she continued to read books from the *Babysitter’s Club* series.

Like her mother, Alicia identified with the characters in the books she read—African American, teen-age girls in realistic urban settings. While Alicia’s reading preferences drew upon the reading practices of family members, neighbors, and her mother’s friends, Alicia’s reading preferences were adaptations rather than adoptions of her mother’s preferences. Discourses related to femininity were apparent.

Ms. Rodriguez dismissed Alicia's books as love novels and often teased Alicia for being a "girly-girl." She described Alicia and her friends as engaging in "girltalk" and recreated one of their telephone conversations for my benefit, "'Ooooh girl, you know what you got on? I'm wearing that tomorrow.' 'I'm wearing this color and di-di-di-di-di.' You know? 'Oh he's cute'" (interview, October 12, 2003). Ms. Rodriguez explained, "Alicia's more interested in how she looks now. . . She won't go outside with her hair undone. Clothes got to be okay" (interview, July 11, 2004). Ms. Rodriguez described Alicia as "dainty" and described herself as being more of a Tomboy like Quanzaa, "This is me [pointed to Quanzaa]. That's not me [pointed to Alicia]" (interview, October 12, 2003). While Alicia's reading preferences and behaviors drew on widely circulating discourses about adolescent girls, Ms. Rodriguez characterized those interests as "girly."

As Alicia moved through school and through time, she operated within a vast range of discourses related to reading in her family, being young and female, her peer's attitudes toward school-assigned books as well as historical messages related to race. While Alicia was clearly not a replication of her mother or her brothers, she operated within a semiotic system that featured particular ways of understanding the world. Alicia functioned within this heteroglossia while drawing on discourses that met her purposes and served her needs.

Discussion

This study illustrates the complexities that accompany meaning construction over time. By tracking multiple discourses related to schooling and literacy, this longitudinal project reveals important insights about the ways understandings of the world circulate and operate. Tracking discourses within one family documents the ways participants drew upon pre-existing understandings of the world to make sense of their own experiences that involved other people, past experiences, and intertextual resources (Lemke, 1995) within a complex heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981). The voices people heard, the texts they read, and the artifacts that they encountered always carried other people's meanings and intentions (Bakhtin, 1981). The discourses, texts, and artifacts encountered by children were particularly powerful in shaping their attitudes and beliefs about the world (Lemke, 1995). Although participants told stories from the past and referenced possible futures, like most educational researchers who focus on short-term projects, they seemed consciously unaware of how understandings of the world changed over time or how they drew across time to make sense of their worlds.

First, discourses accessed by Ms. Rodriguez's children were grounded in available linguistic and semiotic resources. Alicia and her siblings made sense of events at ongoing timescales as they drew upon the past and articulated their understandings in the present. Familial discourses, along with larger historical discourses, informed the interpretation of ongoing events. Participants referenced

uncaring teachers, fairness, sharing books, and getting pushed through school. Family members drew upon historic timescales as they problematized descriptions of their community as a “ghetto,” discussed inequities between suburban and urban schools, noted the role race played in schooling, and shared accounts of police profiling. Children were alerted to potential dangers, shared values, and grounds for critique and agency. While these critiques did not limit children’s futures, Ms. Rodriguez did recognize the necessity of agency (i.e., writing letters, showing up at school, talking with teachers) and the possibility that sans agency possible futures could be tempered.

Second, events acquired meaning in conjunction with other incidents, events, and prior understandings. It was through the intertextual reading of artifacts and events along with the discourses participants used to characterize and present these events that participants made sense of their worlds and their roles in those worlds. Intertextuality, the simultaneous drawing upon multiple texts, was key. Meanings attributed to living in a *ghetto* were contingent on prior associations. Ms. Rodriguez’s understandings of literacy and schooling were related to her memories of reading with her own mother, her school experiences, her reading of favorite books, her efforts to help her children with reading, and her children’s experiences with reading and schooling. Family members deciphered Alicia’s report card grades in relation to grades received in the past by Ms. Rodriguez and in the present by her sons. Likewise, the meanings Alicia associated with music played at Friday Fun sessions, books she read at school, and her “girly” conversations were shaped relative to other music, other texts, and other conversations.

Third, timescale analysis revealed how participants recursively and selectively drew on experiences across time as they repeatedly returned to some stories while neglecting and forgetting others or framed some stories as examples of larger patterns. Some books and literacy practices were mentioned at multiple interviews; others were forgotten. Meanings were not constructed within simple, linear, and chronological landscapes. Participants simultaneously operated within multiple timescales drawing upon historical timescales that carried meanings related to larger social histories, familial timescales that involved local understandings, and ongoing timescales that involved the experiences and voices of others who shared those experiences. For example, despite intertextual tensions historically rooted discourses (i.e., inferior city schools, racism) were voiced alongside familial discourses (i.e., teachers don’t care, certain types of people are not oriented toward school).

In addition, people voiced discourses related to identity as they recognized familiar social types revealing not only affiliations but also the boundaries participants drew between themselves and others. Ms. Rodriguez attributed deficit assumptions about “ghetto” residents to teachers despite also voicing them. Competing social typologies articulated during the interviews simultaneously argued that school was not for some people, constructed teenage girls as focused only on clothing, and identified certain types of people as readers.

Finally, discourses were individually negotiated and adopted as they were taken up, challenged, modified, negotiated, and abandoned. They were not simply modeled by adults and adopted by children. Ms. Rodriguez and her children were selective in what they adopted and adapted as they make sense of themselves and their worlds. The children engaged in various literacy practices: Leon preferred Shakespeare, Quanzaa read *Goosebumps*, Alicia chose teenage romance. In addition, hopes and dreams related to possible futures informed the ways participants drew on existing discourses as they acted as agents in their own lives. Ms. Rodriguez considered the future when she helped her children with reading and refused to let her children get “pushed through” school. Possibilities for agency were expressed as participants operated within and against existing understandings of the world.

Tracking of discourses across time and in reference to multiple timescales allows researchers to recognize the roles played by events, texts, stories, artifacts, and social histories in the semiotic construction of meaning. The combination of heteroglossia within multi-layered temporal contexts begins to illustrate how local understandings circulate within larger social contexts and how individuals adopt and adapt discourses to serve their own intentions and possible futures. It is within the intersection of race, urban educational experiences, family and peer literacy practices, and gender enactments that Alicia became a fan of African American “love novels” and dismissed school texts.

The behaviors and attitudes that some children enact in schools are not simple evidence of disaffection, anger, or rejection of schools and teachers. They are reasonable responses to discourses students encounter over long periods of time as well as acts of agency and identity. Alicia is not merely a young woman who does not value the books she is assigned to read in the eighth grade; she is a student who brings a rich history of literate experiences to her language arts classroom. Through the discourses she voices and the identities she embodies, Alicia carries the strength, resilience, and agency of her mother and grandmother, the successes and struggles of her brothers, and the shared literacy practices of her family. What might be interpreted as evidence of disaffection from school must be reconceptualized as evidence of belonging to a literate-rich and supportive family, alongside institutions embedded with racism, classism, and sexism.

The tracking of discourses revealed by this study illustrates how events in everyday life are constrained but not determined by events at historic, systemic, cultural, familial, and institutional levels. While people experience their lives temporally, they interpret their lives using available discourses at multiple timescales. Histories at the macro-level constrain possible interpretations. For example, the history of literacy practices in schools defined the types of books Alicia encountered—literary “classics” that featured White protagonists, Bowlderized plots, and values espoused by dominant culture. Likewise histories of urban schooling have resulted in dilapidated school buildings, inequitable school funding, inferior instructional materials, and the hiring of uncertified teachers, while dominant dis-

courses and problematic working conditions converge to construct urban teachers as frustrated and uncaring.

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APPENDIX A: ALICIA'S POEMS

Angel

One day I'm gonna have some one I can hold.
 Some one 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 some one 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 some one 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.