

The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices

by

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## ABSTRACT

This self-study examines the role that children's out-of-school lives play in the "schooled literacy practices" of the Morning Meeting, a daily meeting in the teacher-researcher's classroom. Morning Meeting in this Grade 2/3 classroom became a contestable "third space" where several professional tensions intersected for the teacher-researcher. The study explores questions of what "counts as literacy," what role "popular culture" plays in school, and whose voices are privileged or marginalized in schooled literacy discussions. Data was collected over a 3-week period in the form of immediate and more distanced teacher reflections. A Bourdieusian theoretical framework, critical sociocultural literacy theory, third space theory, and artifactual critical literacy, offered the teacher-researcher lenses through which to analyze the meanings found in the everyday stories and artifacts young children share in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. The findings of this study inform and create new thinking about the entanglements of children's out-of-school everyday culture with schooled literacy practices.

*Keywords:* Morning Meeting, literacy and popular culture, artifactual critical literacy, self-study

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Anne and Bill Yakemow. These two people believed in the power of education and encouraged and supported me in every way. They worked hard, sacrificed much, and gave generously. I loved them and miss them. I know that they would be happy and proud of this work.

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**CHAPTER 1: MORNING MEETING—PRACTICES AND THEORY****Opening Vignette**

*It is 8:35am on a Tuesday and our class (Grades 2-3) has gathered together in the meeting area to start our Morning Meeting (please see the description of Morning Meeting on p. 5). After singing O'Canada, taking attendance, looking at what is happening in our classroom for the day, and listening to daily announcements from our principal over the loudspeaker, we settle into the daily ritual of Morning Meeting. It is Tuesday, so Grade 2s have an opportunity to share whatever they choose. I bring out my clipboard to write about who shared and what they shared and I move out of the meeting area to give up the "teacher's" chair for the meeting. Shelby [all students' names are pseudonyms] is first and she has decided to sit in the chair to share so that everyone can see what she has brought. Shelby hugs her Angry Bird stuffie and goes on to tell us that she plays Angry Birds on her iPod and that she bought this stuffie from Toys "R" Us. She is barely finished when children start a loud conversation about many things brought to mind by the presence of a red Angry Bird. Shelby asks for "questions, comments or compliments" so as to continue the conversation in hopefully a less chaotic manner. Ten hands go up and Shelby scans the circle of children to pick someone who has his or her hand up and is also not just shouting something out. Finally, for her third question allowed, she picks me. I ask her, "What are your favourite Angry Birds?" Three people start talking to me at the same time and they tell us about the game and how children are collecting stuffies based on this game.*

*We go down the list of names on the meeting list and Chayce tells us how our NHL team, The Winnipeg Jets, performed last night at the MTS Centre (the arena where*

*the Winnipeg Jets play). Chayce went to the game and has brought in a Jets' puck and composite Jets' mini-stick that he tells us costs \$29.95. Several people are in awe because going to a Jets' game is a "big deal" in Winnipeg these days. Having a Jets' mini-stick for playing a mini-stick game at recess will garner you lots of attention from the devoted hockey players in our school. The meeting lasts about half an hour. By the end, we have talked about Angry Birds, the Winnipeg Jets, a broken TechDeck (finger skateboard), gymnastics, and what someone had for dinner last night. We have been sitting for a while and need a change, so we head off for a walk around the school before Literacy Workshop begins.*

*Angry Birds, TechDecks, gymnastics, and the Jets ... this is just a small sampling of the topics we have discussed in one of our latest Morning Meetings. Are these conversations important? And, if they are important, what impact do I think they have on learning at school?*

### **An Introduction to Morning Meeting**

Morning Meeting is an organizational structure that is part of many classrooms, but its purposes and format differ across classrooms (Harris & Fuqua, 2000; Housego & Burns, 1994; Reich, 1994). Morning Meeting is known under many names: Show and Tell, Show and Share, Circle Time, Sharing Time, and so on. The origins of this daily ritual in many classrooms can be traced to Friedrich Froebel (Harris & Fuqua, 2000; Housego & Burns, 1994; Reich, 1994). Froebel promoted the idea of circle time for children to learn in a group, in a “home-like” atmosphere (Reich, 1994, p. 53). In some classes it is a time to: perform classroom jobs; “do calendar” (discuss information related to the day’s date and time of year); teach and review basic reading, writing, and math skills; collect money for classroom and school activities; and, preview or decide on the agenda for the day.

### **Morning Meeting Structures in Our Classroom**

In our Grade 2/3 classroom, Morning Meeting has evolved as a cornerstone of our classroom life, where our lives come together at school. To those outside of the classroom this time may appear to be no more than *Show-and-Tell* (a time in classrooms where children display and briefly talk about an item they have brought to school from home). On Mondays we have *Monday Morning Mingle*, an existing structure created by grade 3 teachers. It is chaotic with three classes in two rooms but there are those children who seek me out so that we can talk in a smaller group than is possible during the whole class Morning Meeting. On Fridays, we pass a purple heart-shaped stuffie around our Meeting circle and everyone has a chance to share anything he or she wants. Each person



shares and then we pass on the heart. I also take a turn to share on Fridays. In these Friday and Monday meeting structures, before and after the weekend, we have created an opportunity for everyone to talk and time quickly becomes an issue. The class as a whole only sits well for about 30 minutes. So, in order to deepen our conversations, Tuesdays (Grade 2s only), Wednesdays (Grade 3s only), and Thursdays (the first 6 people, on a weekly rotation) are restricted to a smaller group of children who share whatever they like, but also accept and respond to “questions, comments, and compliments” from the other students in the class. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays if someone who is not in the designated sharing group has something “extra special” to share, he or she can usually be added to the agenda if there is time, but no extra time is allotted for these children to ask questions or initiate conversation.

The following are some of the discussion topics that have arisen during our Morning Meetings:

- what the children did the night before
- events happening in the children’s families (birthdays, get-togethers, trips, etc.)
- clubs, sports, and the arts (hockey, soccer, Tae Kwon Do, baseball, dance, and Brownies)
- sports entertainment (hockey, football, soccer, and wrestling)
- multimedia entertainment (movies, concerts, television, and gaming)
- favourites (food, clothes, and “stuff” from home)

- personal treasures
- toys and collectibles

### **Differing Perspectives on Morning Meeting**

The existing research on Show and Tell—the sharing of current events in children's lives—usually falls into two categories: one category where the value of sharing is lauded (Burnell, 1995; Dailey, 1997; Passe, 2006), and its opposite, where disenchantment and critique with the idea of Show and Tell is expressed (Burnell, 1992, 1995; Timberlake, 1973).

Some of the ascribed benefits of having children share their out-of-school experiences during a “schooled literacy practice” (Street, 1984; see the discussion of schooled literacy practice below) such as Morning Meeting include (Burnell, 1995; Dailey, 1997; Passe, 2006):

- Teachers can gain insights into children's lives. We can learn about popular culture in children's lives. We find out what is important, troubling, exciting, and confusing to children.
- Teachers can link personal experiences with curriculum and use this knowledge to shape future lessons, discuss group behaviour, and provide individual guidance.
- Children can discover connections between their personal experiences and those of their peers.
- Children can practise expressing their thoughts in front of an audience.
- A sense of community and trust is created within the classroom.

- It provides an opportunity to develop expressive language as children learn to create and construct language by having to organize ideas in sequence so they make sense to others, choosing the words to say and constructing clear phrases.
- It can enhance the self-concept of the speaker. Children gain confidence in becoming the focus of the group's attention. They find out that others are interested in them, they discover that there are things they know about, and they feel good about themselves doing it.
- It provides an opportunity for children to learn new knowledge. As children share items and ideas, they extend their learning with new concepts, vocabulary, and these show and tell objects/topics can serve as impetus for other projects.
- Teachers can use this time to informally assess children's speech and language skills, emotional needs, levels of autonomy, and self-esteem.

In contrast, some of the criticisms or limitations of Show and Tell reflect the following concerns (Burnell, 1992, 1995; Timberlake, 1973):

- There is limited interactive communication. Total group instruction is not as effective in facilitating the development of communication skills and other aspects of young children's language learning, as are small group interactions that increase two-way communication.
- Discipline problems can arise as children become restless, arising from disinterest in the topics or the children's inability to sit and attend for long amounts of time.
- The idea of bringing toys prompts concerns about the promotion of a materialistic focus (valuing of consumption), competition, and follow-up issues of jealousy

over toys, children's boredom with viewing the same toys repeatedly, and sharing times being viewed as inappropriate when items such as weapons or superhero toys are shared.

- A large block of time is expended.
- The sameness of Show and Tell is monotonous and both students and teachers become bored. Children may give the appearance of listening, but their minds are actually "tuned out," and, therefore, they might be developing poor listening habits.
- It does not provide the best opportunity for language development because it is so habitual and unimaginative, and does not stimulate fresh approaches to language uses.
- Shy children are made uncomfortable and their shyness may be intensified. They may turn and talk to the teacher, excluding their peers.

### **Why Morning Meeting**

In the context of these many potential benefits and challenges previously listed, why has our Morning Meeting become such an important part of our day? A few years ago, Morning Meeting started in a different direction. I would bring in articles from the newspaper to provoke conversations. I believed that this was one way for us to look critically at the world around us. This seemed to work well with the older children I had taught previously, and I thought I would just simplify articles and adopt a similar structure with younger children. When I first tried this with younger children, however, the class would listen politely to the news item and then individuals would put up their

hands (or simply interrupt) to share their pressing news or show their new Puffle (a stuffie based on the popular Club Penguin computer game).

What captivated these young children were the “burning issues” specific to their everyday lives. The children in my room wanted to talk and share, and through this sharing they were showing us what was important to them. At first, I felt that these topics and artifacts were more suited to recess or after school times, and that we needed to talk about “headier” issues or topics more appropriate for school, such as elections and world catastrophes. But, we kept coming back again and again to the NHL and Polly Pockets (small dolls). Over time our structure for Morning Meeting evolved to satisfy the need to talk about our lives with an audience of interested others with whom we worked and played during the school day.

Since then, I have moved to another school with a different group of children. The Morning Meeting structure at the new school has changed very little, and the children also look forward to it each day. The children brought in all sorts of toys and artifacts from their lives that were sometimes considered “priceless”. It is worth noticing that rarely do these items go missing or get broken.

What we talk about in Morning Meeting often spilled over into other parts of our day including *Exploration*, Literacy Workshop, and recess. Exploration was a time where the children had a chance to choose their own activities. Children saw this as a time to play. Children invite others to join them in their play with what they brought for Morning Meeting. Sometimes the children limit the number of those who can play with an item or in an activity at one time. In addition to Exploration, *Literacy Workshop* (a time for mini

lessons—literacy instruction—and for children to work and share their learning through various literacy forms) has also become an extension of what has happened in Morning Meeting.

So, why would I choose to study Morning Meeting, as compared to studying, for example, reading or writing workshop time, given that I am keenly interested in exploring current literacy theory and practices and that Morning Meeting is primarily centred in talk? In Anne Haas Dyson's (1993) ethnographic work with K–Grade 3 children in urban American school settings, she broadens “taken-for-granted” notions of what kinds of language experiences contribute to school literacy success:

I take readers into the neighbourhood corners and alleyways, off the beaten path of the curricular road, where the social action is. Peering into these social places reveals children intensely engaged in social work, using story and other verbal art forms to manage their social relationships with others ... I aim to contribute to a better understanding of the social work of childhood, the ways social work shapes both oral and written composing, and ways of creating classroom crossroads where worlds can come together and open up to new places. (p. 7)

Dyson's (1997) studies of children's social worlds, cultural traditions, and literacy development have helped me to envision how major themes in my practice come together in Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting is a “corner or alley way, off the beaten path” in life at school, and there is a great deal of “social action” happening at this time every day. Morning Meeting exposes children's everyday cultures, which are, in turn, influenced by popular culture.

Morning Meeting is not only important to the children; every day, I too look forward to this time we have together. I have always had a respectful curiosity about children's lives, in and out of the classroom. As a teacher I want to get to know each student and find out what kind of world he or she lives in. I love hearing about who scored a goal last night, where people went on the weekend, and how their little brother "threw up" in the car on the way to grandma's house. Such glimpses into the children's lives enable me to begin to get to know the whole child. After having my own children, I found that I have become fascinated with how many different ways people know my children, and how my children show themselves differently in different contexts (including school). Dyson (1991) writes about the importance of teachers and students finding ways to connect with one another. She is interested in:

how teachers construct a shared world with their students, or, to rephrase, how they might enact a "permeable" curriculum that allows for interplay between teachers and children's language experiences. Such a shared world is essential for the growth of both oral and written language, and it is essential as well if teachers and children are to feel connected to, not alienated from each other. (p. 1)

What children bring in to discuss in Morning Meeting goes far beyond simply purchased, mass-produced popular culture items; rather, these items are the artifacts and treasures of the children's everyday culture (Dyson, 1997; 2003). Dyson's writing about children's everyday culture has helped me to understand our Morning Meeting as a window into aspects of the everyday lives and culture of the children in our class. Not only do the children's everyday cultures consist of a range of popular cultural forms of toys, media, film, television, and computer games, they are also composed from the

bigger ethnic, socio-economic, political, and religious influences in the children's lives. Our classroom represents a diverse group of individuals. But, as different as each child is, oftentimes they find connections to one another in the material objects, experiences, and ideas discussed in Morning Meeting. Children who spend most of their free time at the hockey rink, for example, have sometimes found out that they have a lot in common with someone who has never owned a hockey stick but who loves wrestling and certain video games.

What we talk about in our class is context-specific: it is based on who the children are in our classroom. Jackie Marsh (2005), a leading researcher in popular culture, new media, and digital literacy in early childhood, contends that:

It is important to recognize that particular groups of children will adopt more localized themes and texts that are specific to their cultural practices.... Although children's culture is often shaped by adults and taken up by children (or not, as the case may be) in various ways, children also create their own, child-centred cultural practices. Ultimately, definitions of children's popular culture depend on a sensitive reading of socio-cultural practices in specific contexts. (pp. 2-3)

### **Morning Meeting as a Schooled Literacy Practice**

The title of this self-study intentionally includes the terms "schooled literacy practice" and "children's everyday cultures". These terms reflect particular theoretical constructs, values and meanings. Just like our Morning Meeting is different than other class's Morning Meetings, the term schooled literacy practices is a reference to a certain theoretical orientation (Street, 1984). Street's ethnographic research on the cultural



dimensions of language and learning is a starting point in my description of Morning Meeting. Street used the term schooled literacy practice as a way of describing how literacy is a social practice with cultural and ideological underpinnings. Street points out how literacy varies from one context to another with different results coming from different contexts. Janks (2010) identifies that when other cultures do not have a word for literacy, the translation is often something like “ ‘educated’ or ‘schooled’, with notions of refined, learned, well-bred, civilized, cultured, genteel, lying just beneath the surface” (p. 3). There appears to be a divide between the particular conventions of literacy favoured in formal school systems and families with different literacy practices. The literacy skills valued in school give advantages to some children over others. Schools privilege middle class literacy norms over literacies practiced in many working class homes (Gee, 2003; Heath, 1983, Street, 1984). In Morning Meeting, I am trying to recognise, acknowledge and value children’s lives at face value; what and how they know the world is important. My job is to find a way to show the relevance of out-of-school literacies in school literacy and to build upon these connections to create an expanded conception of what equitable literacy spaces can be like in our classroom.

### **Morning Meeting as a Third Space**

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Turner (1997) define third space theory as:

a place where two scripts or two normative patterns of interaction intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and learning to occur. This is a new sociocultural terrain in which a space for shifts in what counts as knowledge and knowledge representation is created. (p. 372)

Third space theorists also recognize the theoretical perspective of hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994; Bullock, & Christou, 2009; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chui, 1999; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Soja, 1996). Hybridity theory acknowledges:

that people in any given community draw on multiple sources or funds to make sense of the world ... and how being “in-between” several different funds of knowledge and Discourse can be both productive and constraining in terms of one’s literate, social, and cultural practices—and ultimately, one’s identity development. (Moje et al., 2004, p. 42)

The third space becomes a place to open up new alternatives—a space to look at what educators believe about certain issues as well as a middle ground, in-between, or hybrid space where there is contestation of dominant discourses (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). Third space is a theory that recognizes the complexity of examining children’s everyday cultures and literacies, along with schooled literacy practices. First and second spaces are usually defined in terms of binaries “that draw selectively from two opposing categories to open new alternatives” (Soja, 1996, p. 5). Each binary is informed and influenced by the other, and is produced through social practices that occur in the first and second spaces. The third space, where new ways of thinking can be imagined and explored, is created through action.

Marsh (2005) introduced me to the idea of creating popular cultural “third spaces” in the classroom. She cites classroom examples that “recognize how particular groups of children will adopt more localized themes and texts that are specific to their cultural

practices” (Marsh, 2005, p. 2). Reading these socio-cultural practices in specific contexts where “the dynamic interplay between globalizing and localizing effects” creates a potential third space of adoption and revision of children’s popular cultural texts, artifacts and themes (Marsh, p. 2), I see Morning Meeting as a potential third space. It is a site in which to understand the social and cultural practices of children from different backgrounds and experiences in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. It is a third space for me because it is a space for both studying the role of children’s popular culture in the classroom and “a place of action, a moment of intervention or an opportunity for change” (Flessner, 2008, p. 26). There are two types of binaries in Morning Meeting: children’s everyday school cultures/school literacy practices and theory/practice. Bullock and Christou (2009) write about a disciplined approach or sustained critical analysis in exploring the radical middle between theory and practice which becomes a third space: “A disciplined approach to teaching and learning involves recognizing that there is theory in practice and practice within theory. Such an approach recognizes that teaching is inherently problematic” (p. 76).

For Moje et al. (1995), the naming of the two binaries (first space and second space) is important but not as important as the idea of a third space to create new knowledge, understanding, and forms of literacy for students and teachers:

Although we have chosen to align the concept of first space with that of the everyday world that is close or common to people, the naming of what counts as first or second space is arbitrary; one could easily reverse these labels to suggest that first space is often the space which is privileged or dominant in social interaction, whereas second space is that which is marginalized. What is critical to

our position is the sense that these spaces can be reconstructed to form a third, different or alternative, space of knowledges and Discourses. (p. 41)

Moje et al. (1995) examine how third space theory shapes ways of knowing and literacy learning in the classroom when there is a space to integrate everyday ways of knowing with literacy practices at school. Third space theory is complex and dimensions of third space theory that connect to Morning Meeting have theoretical connections with other philosophical beliefs I hold about teaching and learning: a belief in new combinatory theoretical approaches, disruption of binaries or status quo, attention being paid to the importance of everyday lives of teachers and students, opportunities to envision new terms, re-imagining what is often taken for granted, encouragement of others to also engage in re-envisioning, a sense of restlessness, and of trying to move beyond what is presently known (Flessner, 2008, pp. 18-32).

Among third space theorists, Moje et al. (1995) posit that there are three different perspectives on the value of having a third space or “mediational contexts” that connect children’s different funds of knowledge: third space as a bridge, a navigational space (a way of crossing and succeeding in different discourse communities), and as a place of change (that challenges and reshapes both academic and discourse/knowledge of everyday lives (pp. 43-44). Ultimately, when children have multiple ways to know the world that are acknowledged and accessible in school, they have multiple ways for being actively involved in expanding understandings related to literacy and their own identities in school and in their everyday lives.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflection is a critical aspect of teacher learning. The relationship between theory or research and practice is complex. Snow (2001) examines how children, teachers, and researchers “know what they know”. According to Snow (2001), being constrained by the known and going beyond the known, leads to expressing new meanings. Knowing is not doing, nor is doing the same as knowing. Reflections need to be systematized so that personal knowledge can become publically accessible and subject to analysis.

Nothing is neutral. Systemized reflection is not just about naming a theoretical or methodological perspective; it is also about being able to articulate the values attached to why I favour certain ways of thinking over others. As Jennifer Rowsell (2006) writes, “our histories in person—where we come from, our culture, our background, our pedagogical preferences—inform the way we teach and how we teach” (p. 170). I tried to acknowledge who I am, identify my biases (the values attached to my educational decisions), focus on finding out who the child is in front of me, while all the while identifying the lenses I use to make my world meaningful, so that I can work towards a more enlightened teaching future.

The importance of engaging in a self-study was to help me think for myself. Over my career many others have influenced me. I have read a great deal, listened closely, found supportive others, and adopted philosophy/pedagogies/curricular engagements that I felt were a fit with who I was as a teacher. I have relied heavily on others’ opinions to help shape my own. The collective learning I have been part of in professional learning groups has significantly shaped my thinking and practice. I have also tried to take an agentic position about my practice: I believe that I have what it takes to make professional

judgments and to act, and that there is a “relationship between what I do and what happens” (Johnston, 2004, p. 29). Having an opportunity to study myself has pushed me to systematically scrape away some layers and explore a few core understandings that I hold about teaching and learning. This self-study allowed me to listen closely to my *own* thinking and practice, to research in order to satisfy personal/professional viewpoints, and to contribute to larger educational conversations. After a number of years of teaching and completing university course work, I believe this self-study has enabled me to articulate the purposes of my own practice, my personal theoretical frameworks, and to speak with confidence with others about what I do and why I do it, in a scholarly way.

How can my work contribute to larger educational conversations? Children build literacy practices from social and linguistic resources that are deeply rooted in their everyday worlds—worlds that are greatly influenced by popular culture. Many educators see popular culture as “low brow” or lower value culture and not an appropriate content for schooled literacy practices (Alvermann & Hong Xu, 2003). By acknowledging popular culture in schooled literacy practices as potentially a rich learning opportunity, I am seeking to disrupt power relations in the classroom on several levels. This self-study of our Morning Meeting challenges notions of power and privilege in the knowledge creation between teacher and the student, in the valuing of “out of school” experiences and “in school” learning experiences, and it raises questions about who decides what schooled literacy practices are to be valued in official literacy practices (Albright & Luke, 2008; Buckingham, 1998; Janks, 2010; Larson & Marsh, 2006).

Anne Haas Dyson, in her introduction to Janet Evan’s (2004) book *Literacy Moves on: Using Popular Culture, New Technologies, and Critical Literacy in the Primary*

*Classroom*, identified the need for research into practice that looks at how teachers are bridging the gap between children's out-of-school interests and school-based curriculum demands:

As educators, we are in urgent need of a newly conceived language and literacy curriculum, in which we start where children are, in a media-filled world that is increasingly diverse and interconnected.... We may begin by using children's experiences with varied media resources as bridges to more traditional literacy curriculum.... We need curricula in which children and teachers use their cultural and symbolic resources to deconstruct and design texts of varied modalities that might suit an ever-widening, evolving network of communicative practices.... We also need careful research on the nature of such decisions and how they are situated in diverse childhood histories and channelled by varied official and unofficial contextual conditions. (p. x)

### **Underrepresented and Underprivileged: The Role of Popular Culture and Literacy Theory**

My interest in the role of popular culture in schooled literacy practices is rooted in the belief that popular everyday cultural artifacts and practices might not be just a way of creating a "level playing field" for students in school literacy, but possibly as a way of changing the playing field in regards to creating equity for more students through schooled literacy practices. Children come to school knowledgeable about "kid stuff". Children's everyday lives are filled with popular cultural experiences and practices of riding bikes, watching television, going to toy stores, buying candy, using gaming devices, family gatherings, going to the park, and so on. Some of these events are tied to

mass marketed media and others are not. Rich or poor, English or Chinese, male or female, white or brown, tall or short, many children in our class know Dora the Explorer (an animated television show and franchise), Mickey Mouse, candy, and soccer. Popular culture is a simple way of connecting us. We may have interests in different areas, but the reason we identify what we do as popular culture is because these items and experiences are popular with many people.

Children grow up in particular family cultures with ways of living and systems of meaning specific to each child's family. They learn about how to talk, think, and act, what is important, and things that you are "supposed to do" and not supposed to do. When children come to school, they have to learn the culture or the values, traditions, routines, and practices of school and become members of this school culture. Some families try to make the transition from home to school smooth and help their child learn some of the ways of school such as reading to them, teaching them to use scissors, or how to tie their shoes.

The child in front of me in the classroom has multiple identities and experiences that go beyond our classroom walls. Not all family cultural values and practices are as connected to school cultures. Therefore, some children may have an advantage when they make the transition from home to school. Educators have turned to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for conceptual tools to study students, communities, and systems that have historically been marginalized by mainstream schooling (Albright & Luke, 2008). Bourdieu's stance on literacy is that there is a "fundamental paradox of literacy as being both liberatory and conservative, as well as an instrument of both social change and social reproduction" (Kramsch, 2008, p. 45). Bourdieu (1984) believed it was important



to make visible the invisible institutionalized obstacles and barriers that prevent upward mobility for all.

Bourdieu (1986), was concerned with how knowledge, power, and structures in the lives of young children create social and cultural inequalities. Bourdieu's approach requires that individuals be connected with their own socio-cultural environment; individual knowledge is formed through interaction with the socio-cultural surroundings (Bourdieu, 1990). Such knowledge is formed by the structures wedded to pre-existing values, principles, and ways of thinking. The relationship is dialectic, where the two are seen as inter-related, dynamic and equally important. Bourdieu (1986) believed that literacy is located within the framework of concerns about access to symbolic and material resources, a practice embedded in production and reproduction of social difference and inequality. Social "actors" get positioned differently in a system of unequal distribution of resources, developing different orientations to and understandings of the system (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieuian analysis offers me a language to trace the different literacies, identities, knowledge, and experiences important in children's lives and connect them in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. There are multiple stances in which to interpret Bourdieu and I, like others before me, am choosing theoretical tools Bourdieu fashioned because they are situated close to my own perspectives. Bourdieu's three "main thinking tools" of *habitus*, *field*, and *capital* enable me to turn the literacy paradox of Morning Meeting into a potentially transformative, creative experience.

Bourdieu explores ways in which habitus or the “habits produced by the family” (O’Connor, 2011, p. 116) contribute to children’s experiences at school in official and unofficial ways. The notion of habitus explains how children unconsciously appropriate dispositions, values, rules and tendencies to think and act in certain ways (Kramsch, 2008).

This natural way of being is initially acquired in the home and is in a dialectic relation with a field. A field is “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 53). There are different fields, and my focus is primarily on whether the field of children’s families matches the field of schooling. A field is a set of domains where people compete to define what is important and try to gain advantage as individuals and groups by defining what is most valuable. Each field is a site of struggle among conflicting forces. Each field has different forms of capital. For Bourdieu (1992), growing up consisted of finding out how to convert these forms of capital into symbolic capital in various fields of activity—how to manoeuvre into a position of strength within school. Bourdieu called this maximizing one’s “profit of distinction” in the struggle for symbolic power, that is, enhancing one’s symbolic capital (Kramsch, 2008, p. 40).

The notion of capital helps to explain how children are positioned in the educational field. According to Bourdieu (1986), children come with different life experiences that influence their success in school. Each field, home and school, constitutes different forms of capital. He questioned whether children living in different circumstances are really given equal access to literacy in school. Bourdieu believed there is a relationship between the child’s family and background, school culture, and that

child's success in school literacy. Bourdieu suggests that the family's influence provides the child with certain *social and cultural capital*. Jane O'Connor (2011) describes the Bourdieusian concept of social capital as "who you know" and cultural capital as "what you know" (p. 116). The other areas of capital are economic (wealth and income) and symbolic capital (privileged social status and position). Bourdieu calls distinction any enhancement of one's symbolic position within a field. A profit of distinction is the result of the struggle to be noticed, validated, respected, and admired (Kramsch, 2008, p. 41). (I provide a more detailed explanation of symbolic capital on p. 67.)

O'Connor (2011) applies Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital and habitus to early years literacy research and finds that these key aspects of Bourdieu's work help to explain the fit or lack of fit between children's out-of-school experiences and schooled literacy practices: "[Bourdieu] conceptualizes social life as a game within which there is competition for resources and, according to the rules of the game, those with higher levels of social and cultural capital are more likely to be winners" (p. 116). Children from middle class backgrounds who have experienced and understood the social and cultural codes and who have acquired the cultural and social capital privileged by schools before they attend school are clearly at an advantage. Educators and schools, therefore, play a significant role in minimizing or magnifying social and cultural inequalities for children. Bourdieu challenges educators to question which pedagogies and social practices will provide an access to power and capital to meet the needs of all students who walk through our classroom doors.

I am using Bourdieu's combinatory models of habitus, field, and capital to assess the role and relationship of children's out-of-school literacy practices and schooled

literacy practices in Morning Meeting. His frameworks are helping me illuminate how individual and collective habitus get formed, shaped, and transformed in interaction with different fields of school and home in Morning Meeting. There is an underlying complex system in Morning Meeting of exchanges and remaking of capital, identity, social relations, and the interplay of positions and position-taking in relation to the structuring of literacy in school and children's out-of-school cultural lives. Bourdieusian frames for talking about systems of unequal and inequitable exchanges in material and symbolic resources, and the theme of how to alter and shift the flow of capital, are relevant to my understandings of Morning Meeting. These ideas are also helping me identify some of the contingencies that affect students' social and learning trajectories, such as how students access sufficient capital, the capital students can access relevant to systems of exchange in school, and how the students' capital is valued in school.

Dominic Scott (2004) points out how children today experience a "new childhood" and face different influences in how they learn or make sense of the world. In the past, parents, schools, and churches often helped children mediate their world. Today, because of the media and other digital technologies, parents often are ill equipped to help children navigate their "cultural neighbourhood", and are replaced by parental surrogates such as corporations, media, the Internet, toys, video games, peers, and popular culture.

This new cultural neighbourhood is full of spaces where children still have to read, make sense of things, and ultimately contribute to the creation of images and identities for themselves. But, I have also started to think more deeply about what kinds of capital young children have and the implications this exploration has for classroom practice. I am also seeing how my own interests in popular culture, new technologies, and

critical literacy are intertwined with each other. Now that I am more open to exploring children's cultural and social capital in official school spaces, I understand my responsibility as being more than simply emptying out children's pockets on the table. What do we do with the range of social and cultural capital children bring with them to school and what are the implications for literacy learning?

I see literacy use as being multi-sited, multimodal, and that it must be interrogated by children and adults together as we come to understand how it operates in our worlds. I want to think with my students about their worlds, through both the official and unofficial literacy spaces in our classroom and beyond our four classroom walls. When I open myself up to definitions of "text" and literacy as "anything children use to make meaning and, as such ... [not] confined to just printed text (Rowse, 2006, p. 30), the world of language and literacy education begins to look very different.

In *Creating Critical Classrooms*, Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) identify three theoretical notions that have helped me to organize my own theoretical understandings for analyzing the relationship between popular culture, new technologies, and critical literacy (pp. 44-53).

**Theory 1: Literacy keeps changing and is often linked to popular culture.**

Jeff Share (2009), in *Media Literacy is Elementary*, suggests that for literacy teaching and learning to be more relevant, meaningful, and transformative, there should be movement in two ways: horizontal expansion and vertical deepening. The horizontal expansion of definitions of literacy includes: multiple ways people read, write, view and create information and messages (i.e., through popular culture, advertising, photographs,

phones, movies, video games, Internet, as well as print). Many of these ideas can be expressed through concepts of multimedia literacy, new literacies, multimodal literacies, technology/computer literacy, and visual literacy (Share, 2009, p. 106). The vertical movement involves the skills and dispositions of critical thinking grounded in social consciousness and an understanding of knowledge as socially and historically constructed within hierarchical relationships of power. This thinking can also be found in many concepts, including critical literacy, critical pedagogy, critical reading, and critical multiculturalism (Share, 2009, p. 106).

Donna Alvermann and Shelley Hong Xu (2003) define popular culture in terms of children's everyday literacies. They describe a view of popular culture as:

one that conceptualizes it as everyday culture. Those who favour this kind of popular culture reject notions of mass media producing mindless audiences....

This recognition of popular culture as everyday culture—and like the media, constantly changing—suggests that audiences are indeed capable of simultaneously incorporating both pleasures and critiques in their use of it.

Further, it suggests as Marsh and Millard (2001) maintain “children are agents in the construction of their culture at the same time as being subject to hegemonic discourses of profit and consumerism. They both accept and reject the products offered to them. (p. 6)

Dyson (2003) adds yet another layer for me from an adult's/teacher's perspective. She reminds me to think about literacy from a child's point of view or inside *children's culture*—their everyday literacies or everyday textual lives— and the intersection with

school culture. In her ethnographic study of five 6-year-old, African-American children, Dyson explores notions of a permeable curriculum starting from inside children's culture rather than starting outside the child or from official school literacy practices in order to open up new learning pathways and new learning possibilities. She studied how children use their everyday culture for their own pleasure and for school learning.

According to Dyson (2003), children's life worlds and their everyday knowledge may vary but are all influenced by: ethnicity, social class, social interactions, gender, mass media, religion, and ideology, just to name some influences. When children use familiar frames of reference and well-known materials in school from their everyday cultures, they become agents or active participants in recontextualizing experiences. They are able to stretch, reorganize, re-voice, and re-mix experiences to "open up literacy pathways" (Dyson, 2003, p. 104).

Dyson (2003) also broadens definitions of what constitutes "text":

Previously texts were seen as things written down—books, magazines, and newspapers. They are now perceived as being more than this. A text is now seen as a unit of communication that may take the form of something written down but also a chunk of discourse, e.g. speech, a conversation, a radio programme, a TV advert, text messaging, a photo in a newspaper, etc. Many of these texts are drawn from children's popular culture and have changed the ways they think and the ways they construct meanings. (p. 10)

Children are not simply consumers of language and popular culture, but, rather, they are active participants who are capable of challenging the status quo of what is in

front of them as they produce/create meaningful language and text. Gunther Kress (cited in Rowsell, 2006), points out that meaningfulness for children is not found just in their use of language but in their making of language (p. 17).

**Theory 2: Schools can be a site for interrogating cultural texts and repositioning oneself.**

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) believe schools have a role to play in helping children develop a critical stance. They define critical literacy as practices that:

encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice. (p. 3)

These principles can be taken up in the daily school lives of children and teachers. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) remind us that we are all positioned by implicit cultural messages that define how we think and how we should look and live. They believe that, “critical literacy is about helping people learn how to use language effectively to get their perspectives heard. It is about giving people opportunity to challenge the cultural pressures that influence every aspect of their lives” (p. 49).

**Theory 3: Children need to develop the language of critique to be truly literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

As literacy keeps changing, relevant and meaningful analytic tools need to evolve as well. Vivian Vasquez (2004) points out how in today's world, language is not the only communication system. Images, artifacts, and other visual symbols have gained in significance. Vasquez draws upon the work of Barbara Comber to illustrate how the



language of critique is really about helping people learn to use language effectively to get their perspectives heard:

Comber (2001) describes critical literacies as involving people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices or privilege and injustice. She continues to suggest that often—perhaps usually—critical literacies are negotiated in the more mundane and ordinary aspects of daily life. As such, a critical literacy curriculum needs to be lived. It arises from the social and political conditions that unfold in communities in which we live. Therefore, it cannot be traditionally taught. In other words, as teachers we need to incorporate a critical perspective into our daily lives with our students in order to find ways to help our children understand the social and political issues around them. (Vasquez, 2004, p. 205)

Gunther Kress (as cited in Bearne, 2005), who has been involved in critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis for the past 25 years, believes critical literacy practices need to address contemporary social frames, not those of the 1960s and 70s. He sees these older critical analysis frames as being backward looking, focusing on other's agendas instead of seeing individuals as capable knowledge creators, producers, and users (as cited in Bearne, 2005). Gee and Hayes (2011) believe we need more experiences in school that allow us to be critical literacy learners and consumers, and not simply “co-consumers”, to adapt to 21<sup>st</sup> century life:

Such a world requires that people “read” words, images, and multimodal texts critically in terms of asking whose interests are served and whose are not, and

what the agendas were of the producers of those words, images, and texts. This critically requires yet more experience, though perhaps experiences of a different sort from those of non-critical consumers. (p. 120)

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FOCUS, METHODOLOGY, AND ETHICS

#### Principal Research Question

At the centre of this study is the question: “What role could children’s everyday cultures play in ‘schooled literacy’”? I explored this question during Morning Meeting, which was a third space in between our schooled literacy practices and students’ out-of-school interests, where the children’s everyday cultures “rubbed up” against school culture. More specifically, I asked myself the following questions: “Does Morning Meeting create the kind of space that genuinely allows students to reveal themselves and outgrow themselves?” “What impact does Morning Meeting have on the pedagogical foundations, social practices, and literacy practices in my classroom?” “Why do I feel so strongly about bridging children’s outside school experiences and identities in a meaningful way that enhances their life and learning inside school?”

By examining how our classroom Morning Meeting functions as an official educational space that yields a third space in between schooled literacy practices and students’ out-of-school interests, I researched how this space:

- helped me get to know and understand the children in my care;
- helped me to see how children may/may not show who they are and/or have opportunities and experiences to outgrow themselves;
- allowed me to explore personal understandings of literacy, teaching, and learning;
- and, pushed me to investigate possible learning relationships between children’s out-of-school cultural lives and schooled literacy practices.

Through Morning Meeting, the children's intra- and inter-personal identities also began to emerge, which connects with questions I have about how children show themselves and how they develop relationships with others in the class. The objects that were shared and the discussions that developed from Morning Meeting also found their way into Exploration and Literacy Workshop times. As such, Morning Meeting became a space in my practice where I confronted challenging professional pedagogical understandings regarding schooled literacy practices (Street, 1991). Specifically, what counts as literacy, what literacy practices belong in school, what literacy practices get left out, and whose voices are being privileged through these practices.

On the surface, Morning Meeting may appear as simply Show-and Tell. But, I see it as much more than that. Closely examining Morning Meeting became a valuable opportunity for me to critically explore literacy theory in direct connection with my own practice. Extending this interest into a more systematic self-study allowed me to explore theories, pedagogies, and methodologies for studying children's "textual life worlds" (Carrington, 2005). In this pursuit, I expanded my understanding of children's textual lives as inclusive of discourses about the children's everyday cultural artifacts (textual toys, etc.) and practices, and I blurred the lines between literacy in school and literacy out-of-school.

### **Why Self-Study as a Methodology**

Self-study is the study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas, as well as the "not self". It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and it draws on one's life, but it is more extensive than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful

consideration of texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered. These are investigated for their connections with and the relationships to practice as a teacher educator. (Hamilton and Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236)

I believe that systematic self-study research methodology best suits who I am, who I want to become, and what I want to do. Self-study is an inquiry-based, personal, postmodern, reflective, multi-perspectival, and collaborative approach (Samaras and Freese, 2006, p. 13). Self-study acknowledges diverse methods but primarily includes qualitative research methods to analyze and represent findings. Self-study research methodology maintains the “self” in the research process and acknowledges the postmodern world-view that there are no singular truths, but multiple and differentially positioned understandings. Samaras and Freese (2006) point out in their review of the foundations of self-study that, “the literature illustrates how the growth and development of self-study has its roots in a number of research areas and its history reflects how the research interests have become intertwined and evolved from a number of different influences” (p. 30).

Samaras and Freese (2006) identify five central characteristics of self-study:

1. self-study is situated inquiry;
2. self-study is process;
3. self-study is knowledge;
4. self-study is multiple; and,
5. self-study is paradoxical.

**Self-study is situated inquiry.**

Self-study legitimizes the teacher's role as a scholar and researcher (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kincheloe, 1991; Wilcox, Watson, & Paterson, 2004). The emphasis in self-study is on the pursuit of personal questions that are situated in particular contexts. Knowledge is relevant and meaningful because it is directly connected to the practitioner's own questions and context. Knowledge and authority are generated by the practitioner doing the research, rather than outside researchers. The notion of teachers as scholars and researchers in their own classrooms challenges the inequality, power, and privilege of research that is only considered of value when it is conducted and published by researchers affiliated with research institutions.

**Self-study is process.**

Self-study research emphasizes a process of ongoing discovery. Self-study is a systematic process of investigating, representing, analyzing, reframing, and sharing data in hopes of developing new perspectives and understandings (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Self-study is not an attempt to find absolute answers to questions but an attempt to "enrich the scope and breadth of one's ongoing understanding about practice and educational programs" (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 43). I disrupted what Whitehead (1989) calls my "living contradictions" or the gap between my teaching philosophy and my practice. This was a journey towards greater understanding. Reframing one aspect of my practice led to thinking differently, changing the way I look at what is going on, and helped me see previously unimagined possibilities.

**Self-study is knowledge.**

Self-study can extend knowledge on three levels: personal, professional, and program/institutional (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 44-45). As John Dewey (1916) reminds us, “no thought, no idea, can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another.... Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding [his or her] way out does [a person] think” (p. 188). Self-study emphasizes self-direction and self-monitoring of everyday practices and practical theories (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 50). Working with outside researchers’ perspectives to help develop new perspectives and future possibilities, I wanted knowledge to be generated by me for me. Through formal self-study research methodology, I gained insight into my beliefs and practices in order to better understand my teaching and my students’ learning. This self-study master’s thesis research, then, was about exploring who I am and the living issues of certain aspects of my practice in hopes of reconceptualizing and reframing my practice. I wanted to explore how my research might contribute to knowledge production and the discourse of the larger educational community. As Ham and Kane (2004) suggest, “the study of teaching is not purely the study of the personal, but of the personal within the professional” (p. 116).

This self-study of Morning Meeting is also connected with what Judith Warren Little (1995) calls a “contested ground”, a means for illuminating dilemmas of ambiguity and conflict (p. 45). I see my self-study research as a way to contribute to a larger professional dialogue about who and what counts in literacy education, from the vantage point of my own classroom. My research contributes to discussions in the field focussed on:

- Self-study as a methodology
- Critical sociocultural theory in practice
- Literacy and popular culture
- Third space research
- Generative change theory

Self-study gave me the confidence that my research could also contribute to larger educational landscapes. Samaras and Freese (2004) identify the importance of audience in self-study (p. 51). By making my research known to others in a scholarly community, it will allow me to move beyond my personal views as I hear and learn from outside interpretations and alternative perspectives. By taking my work public, I also hope that it may connect with or be helpful to others.

I also see how my work can contribute to literacy research that explores the use of children's out of school interests to develop literacy in the classroom, because the research is situated in a classroom. Currently, much of the research on this topic is theory-based with requests for examples from practice into the connections between popular culture and literacy.

I see how notions of power and inequity are intertwined within who I am as a learner and researcher, with my work with children, and with my understanding of theories and methodologies upon which I draw as lenses in this self-study. One of the primary goals of practitioner research is that "it challenges inequities, raises questions about the status quo, and enhances the learning and life chances of students" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 102). The first way I am challenging existing structures of power is by taking responsibility for my own learning and knowledge construction. By



systematically and critically disrupting my own ways of thinking and of practice, I am taking charge of my learning and professional development. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) point out that calling into question one's deeply entrenched assumptions and challenging educational status quos is political and transformative work:

Teachers cannot shed or transcend their own social locations in pursuit of an unobtainable notion of neutrality. And they probably need to do more than simply “come clean” about their own identity markers or political commitments in the beginning of their work. Instead, they may make visible how their culturally influenced perspectives and values are imprinted throughout their research. (p. 338)

As previously discussed, another way I am challenging existing structures of power is by studying the role of popular culture in schooled literacy.

### **Self-study is multiple.**

Another central characteristic of self study is its multi-perspectival understandings of teaching and learning (Samaras & Freese, 2006): “Self study is multiple and multifaceted. By that we mean self-study teachers can practice self-study using different theories, various different methods, and with numerous purposes” (p. 46). I also am heavily influenced by the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), leaders in the field of practitioner research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) define practitioner research as:

An umbrella term to encompass multiple genres and forms of research (including action research and self study) where the practitioner is simultaneously a researcher who is continuously engaged in inquiry with the ultimate purpose of

enriching students' learning and life chances.... We use the term research rather than the somewhat softer word inquiry to signal that practitioner research is not simply a beneficial, but benign, form of professional development for individuals and groups (which it can be). Rather we suggest that it is also a valuable mode of critique of the inequities in schools and society and of knowledge hierarchies, which have implications within as well as beyond the local context. (p. 338)

**Self-study is paradoxical.**

Self-study is individual and collective, personal and interpersonal, and private and public (Samaras & Freese, 2006). The work I am doing for this master's thesis is for me and for the children I teach, but as I have also mentioned, it is intended to contribute to larger educational conversations.

Our Morning Meeting became the moment of our day where so many issues intersect with one another. It is a place where out-of-school culture intermingles with school culture; it is a conscious exploration of the role of children's cultures in school and the effects it has or not on teaching and learning; it raises questions about how I define literacy and being literate; and it demands that I critically inquire into whose voices are privileged.

Questions have emerged for me about knowledge production, teaching, literacy theory, schooling, and power. Exploring knowledge production in the local context of my practice (Morning Meeting) in relation to issues of authorship, ownership, and authority, played an important role in my research. As I have noted, I was not looking to find final answers to questions, but instead I wished to investigate how I could systematically

question my assumptions, beliefs, and practices, how I could generate new knowledge and articulate my understanding in a scholarly fashion, and how I could work with the new possibilities and developments that grow out of my research into our everyday classroom practices.

### **Data Collection**

While the children in my class were central participants in our Morning Meeting, my self-study research focus was on what *I* learned from these meeting conversations in terms of my professional theoretical insights and practices in relation to literacy education. It is important that readers understand this. My intention was not to report on the children's activities and discourse arising during Morning Meeting. Rather this research study is located in the mind of the researcher as I tried to make sense of what I was learning from Morning Meeting as I was engaged in an ongoing process of literacy theory construction and refinements of my classroom literacy practices. Since I was in a power-over relationship with my students as their teacher, I did not request permission from ENREB to include exact words the children said on the dual field notes. Instead, I focused on key words and phrases of the ideas, issues and themes as they were expressed in talk and artifact sharing. These exact words or children's names on dual field notes were not used in the final thesis. Dual field notes were used for later reflections as I looked for patterns and themes to help me understand the importance of having time for children to talk about different parts of their life in school and how that impacted what I know about literacy.

Every year there is a standard form in my school division that families of the children complete authorizing (or not) permission to make students' work public beyond

the classroom. Although families had an opportunity to sign or not sign this divisional consent form (at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year) which permits the use, display, or sharing of documentation of the student's learning outside the classroom for educational/informational purposes, this signed form was separate from the assent of the children and consent of their families to participate in my self-study master's thesis research. I asked for permission to include data collection only during the 3-week data collection phase (April 21-May 9, 2014). I was not asking for permission to use previously collected data outside of the 3-week data collection phase. Data was collected for a 3-week time period in order to provide sufficient, manageable data for analysis.

Part of my regular teaching responsibilities during Morning Meeting were to document who and what was said. This was one of the ways I was able to find out more about children's out-of-school lives and document these conversations, which I would review in more detail at another time. Making observational field notes is standard reflective professional teaching practice that enables teachers to assess and evaluate the growth of student learning and to support potential curricular and pedagogical next steps for students. These daily written records of personal observations have been part of my regular practice for the past three years.

The data collection phase of Morning Meeting was similar in structure to our regular Morning Meeting. In Morning Meeting students wrote the agenda or the list of names and the topic each student wanted to share for each meeting. My participation was to record the content of each student's share, intervening if the child speaking needed help, as well to provide support to the other children in sharing, listening, and responding. I also contributed personally to what was said and shared as a co-participant, monitoring

the pace of the Morning Meeting, and I identified possible curricular connections to other parts of our learning day that grew out of what had happened during the day's meeting.

Before the data collection phase, we occasionally videotaped Morning Meetings in order that we might revisit them later for a variety of different purposes. My school division's consent form for documenting children's learning for educational/informational purposes includes work samples, awards and achievements, photographs, and video recordings. All families signed these forms at the beginning of each school year. The information about this divisional consent form was shared with my university's research and ethics board: Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). My intention was to be transparent with ENREB that creating documentation in these various forms were already part of my school division's expectations of teachers and compatible with the Division's philosophical stance towards reflective teaching practice.

Data collection was scheduled for the 3-week period from April 21-May 9, 2014, dependent on when ENREB's granting permission to conduct the proposed study. Once ENREB permission was granted and approval to conduct my self-study at my school was received from my school principal and from the Division's assistant superintendent responsible for research and ethics applications to the Division, I sent permission/consent/assent forms for the new purpose of conducting data collection and analysis for my master's thesis to all families in my class. An invitation to attend an information night for families was sent at this time as well. I proceeded to conduct this informational night for families in my school's library before data collection began (Appendixes A-F).

Through the consent letter and in any responses to questions or concerns about the study discussed at the information meeting, I ensured that all students and their guardians understood the process in which they were to be engaged, including why their participation and freely informed and voluntary consent was requested, how the data was to be used, and how and with whom findings of the study would be shared.

Students were asked to participate through voluntary informed assent and the consent of their guardians (e.g. parents) or responsible others (e.g. social worker). The assent/consent letter was written without technical educational language so as to ensure the likelihood that families were able to fully understand what was being asked of them should they assent/consent to participate. All families were provided with an initial and continuing opportunity to refuse or withdraw their assent/consent at any point before, during, and up to the end of the school year (the end of June, 2014).

I did not use any data related to children or families who chose not to be part of the data collected for this master's thesis. The letter/forms indicated that any participant had the right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time. There were no incentives being offered to encourage participation. I would have immediately made known to participants any predictable detriment or unexpected detriment which arose during the process or findings of the research. To ensure the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data, students were informed about how assent/consent forms and data were stored, to what uses the data were being put and to whom it would be made available.

Data were kept secure during the research process and then destroyed, and any publication from my thesis will not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of participants' confidentiality and anonymity. Owing to the cultural and linguistic demographics of my particular students, no additional regulations or cultural sensitivities for a collective approach to consent (e.g. English as an Additional Language, permission from community or religious leaders) were necessary.

As the classroom teacher and researcher, I was in a "power-over" relationship with the students in my care. Students' participation, data to be collected, the analysis of the data, and the reporting of the findings for my master's thesis were not in any way connected with my teaching or assessment of my students, however, to ease any pressure families might have felt because I was their child's teacher, I asked that returned consent forms be sent to the school office, addressed to the school secretary, and not given to me. The school secretaries stored the consent letters in a sealed envelope in a locked cabinet in the school office until the end of the school year (June 28, 2014).

I received the permission/consent/assent forms from the school secretaries after the final day of school and after final grades were sent home for the 2013/14 school year. Those families who requested a summary of my findings will be contacted after completion of my self-study thesis. I received assent/consent from 17 out of 22 students/families to draw upon my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting, in order to help me learn more about how what is important to children (expressed during Morning Meeting) might make a difference in our literacy practices in school. I only considered reflections on observations that I made during Morning Meeting from the 17 children in my classroom during the data collection period who had provided assent/consent to

participate in the study. I wish to make it very clear that the intent of this research was to benefit my own professional practice in the classroom and to enable me to contribute to an educational (theory-practice) dialogue about the role of popular culture in schooled literacy practices. Eleven families requested of me that I provide them with a summary of the study that shows how this data informed my thinking and teaching practices. A copy of my completed thesis will be made available at the school, and the school secretary and Parent Council will be informed when it is available to be viewed by interested individuals.

The data collected over the 3-week research period took the form of dual field notes and journal reflections, taken by me, the teacher-researcher. My intent was to use different types of data collection to ensure that I would be able to collect data and analyze Morning Meeting in a meaningful way that could contribute to my theoretical understandings of my practice. Dual field notes and reflections gave me the opportunity to use research methods of note taking that were immediate, accessible, manageable, and taken in the moment. I recorded brief notes while I was observing Morning Meeting in an attempt to record as much detail as possible, including direct quotes or close approximations of what was said. These brief notes were later expanded, including greater detail of what was observed, and at this time I also included preliminary interpretations (hence, the “dual” nature of these field notes). The second part of this data collection process involved the creation of journal reflections (that included the making of theoretical memos) based on the dual field notes. These reflective journal entries included speculations, interpretations, ideas as well as thoughts about emerging themes and patterns, methodological issues, possible ethical concerns, and opinions, attitudes,



and biases. Each day during the data collection phase I created dual field notes (that was in itself a two-step process) and then later that evening I would write a journal reflection after revisiting the field notes of the day.

The choice of data collection methods for my thesis was intentionally designed to mirror regular routines of our class's cultural and social literacy practices, and was an attempt not to interfere with the usual spontaneity of the children's sharing and conversations during Morning Meeting. My hope was that the children would not feel as if they had to "play up" to me—the teacher/researcher who was note-taking. I believed that if the children did not have to say or do things differently than they normally would then they would be more likely to go about sharing their lives as they have been doing in our class throughout the year.

As background for the reader, for the past three years I have been taking daily written notes of what was said and who said what during Morning Meeting. This is a pedagogical practice situated in Morning Meeting that I utilize purposefully as data in my self-study research. This type of recording was manageable, immediate, and gave me information about what was happening in the children's lives outside of school. I tried to pay close attention and write down some of what was said verbatim, and other information was paraphrased.

However, I wanted to be able to revisit Morning Meeting to be able to deconstruct it and dig deeper into my practice-theory understandings as the focus of my master's thesis research. My reflective journal entries allowed me to go back and linger longer in the moment of the meeting.

All documentation of data from dual field notes and from my journal reflections for the 3-week period for this self-study research were recorded and later re-analyzed by me, the teacher researcher. All data from the 3-week period of dual field notes and journal reflections were used for *my* reflective purposes and are referred to in my thesis through my descriptions to *my learning only*, using pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. As noted in the opening vignette of the thesis, pseudonyms were used when referring to students in my thesis, and these pseudonyms be used in any future presentations, or publications. Data collection field notes and reflections based on observations of children who, or whose families, did not give consent were not included in any way in the data analysis, and were destroyed/shredded immediately after discovery of who had not given permission to participate in this master's thesis study.

Data from the 3-week collection period including field notes, journal reflections, and any other pieces of confidential documentation were stored in a secured locked cabinet in my classroom. As I was writing the thesis these documents have been stored in a secured locked cabinet in my home until my thesis is complete. I will keep all data related to those who have given permission for participation in the study in the secured locked cabinet in my home until 6 months after the completion of my master's thesis. I will destroy the data 6 months after the completion of the study. Written transcriptions will be shredded. Electronic files will be deleted.

I would like to note that I spent a great deal of time responding to many questions and concerns initially raised by ENREB (Manitoba Education Nursing Research and Ethics Board). Initially I wanted to include video recordings of Morning Meeting. The issues surrounding the use of video data collection for educational purposes are complex

and multi-layered. My master's thesis was to be an attempt to look closely at the role of children's out-of-school, everyday cultural artifacts and experiences in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. It was to be an opportunity for me to use multi-perspectival theoretical frameworks and lenses to systematically study a third space or a time in our day when multiple literacy issues intersect with each other. By using more than one data collection method, layers of description of Morning Meetings were to have been built, giving me "thicker description" (Geertz, 1973) and through persistent observation and reflexivity, increase the credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this self-study.

There are many theoretical, methodological, and practical considerations for planning and implementing research using video recording as a method of data collection. And as with all methods of data collection, there are affordances and constraints. Video recording would have given me visual contextual information that might have enriched my data. It could have offered richer descriptive, explanatory, and interpretive accounts of Morning Meeting. Video recording could have provided etic data that would have enriched my interpretations of themes and conclusions that explain trends and findings about children's everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices as seen in Morning Meeting. Using video recording for data collection and analysis could also have provided a way to study "invisible" elements of Morning Meeting. This research method would have offered an accessible way of retrospective analysis. It could have been viewed at a different time compared to taking observational written notes of the immediate moment of the Morning Meeting. Video would have offered a more complete sense of the children's contributions, the setting, and the types of artifacts and

conversations we were having. When doing observational written notes or field notes, researchers can miss the inter-group interaction. Video recording could have also provided information about sound, movement (gestures, facial expressions, interactional cues), and intensity of attention of participants including myself. With written field notes, I often can only write down the gist of what was said and brief notes about interactions because of constraints of memory and the speed of writing compared to talking. Video recording could have allowed me to experience Morning Meetings repeatedly by playing them back. This might have created the potential of seeing/hearing things I may not have been aware of at the time of taping or other viewings. It also could have allowed me time to contemplate and linger in the data before drawing conclusions. Real time observation notes do not have the advantage of this intensity of analysis. I am not suggesting that video recording alone would have provided insight into the data. It is the way I would have interacted with the video that could have identified the potential for learning.

Using video recording for data collection and analysis might also have allowed me to notice and analyze not only the content of Morning Meeting but also what this methodology could offer me in terms of connecting children's out-of-school lives with schooled literacy practices. Part of the theoretical frameworks that are of interest to me for this thesis involve research from New Literacies Studies and Multimodality (as discussed in Chapter 2) which include a focus on the impact of digitization in literacy theory and practice. Using the relatively new media of video recording in my thesis would have allowed me to use video for obtaining and assessing data as well as using a new literacy medium as part of in my literacy practice.

As this was a self-study, data collection was designed to be a reflexive tool for

me, the teacher-researcher, to record Morning Meeting as best I could, using methodological approaches that reflected my regular practice. After consultation with my thesis advisor, given the resistance of the ENREB committee to any use of data associated with video-taping Morning Meeting, coupled with the compatibility of using written field notes with my regular form of documentation in the classroom during Morning Meeting over the past few years, I elected to remove the use of video-taping in the proposed data collection process. And while videotaping had occasionally been used during Morning Meeting before the data collection period, for the reasons discussed, I relied on taking written field notes during Morning Meeting (recording my observations as best I could).

Observational note taking using dual entry field notes is standard practice in my early years classroom during all parts of the learning day. Only the notes from the Morning Meetings during the approved data collection phase were included in the study. I believe that these two methodological approaches of field notes and journal reflections, used in concert, offered sufficient and significant data to support deep analysis of the questions I had, particularly pertaining to the value of the role of children's everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

### Levels of Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is based on my interpretations of topics generated from my dual entry field notes and my reflective journal. Data was generated from daily dual field notes and daily reflections of the Morning Meeting. On Mondays and Fridays in Morning Meeting, during the 3-week data collection period, all of the students and I had a chance to share one artifact or story or could pass on our turn. On Tuesdays (Grade 2s only), Wednesdays (Grade 3s only), and Thursdays (the first 6 people, on a weekly rotation) were restricted to a smaller group of children, who shared whatever they like, but also accepted and responded to “questions, comments, and compliments” from the other students in the class. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays if someone who was not in the designated sharing group had something “extra special” to share, he or she could usually be added to the agenda if there was time, but no extra time was allotted for these children to ask questions or initiate conversation. On Mondays and Fridays of the data collection period, on an average between 15-22 children shared on these days and 6-10 children shared on each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. During the data collection period, I only considered dual field notes and reflections on observations that I made during Morning Meeting from the 17 children in my classroom who had provided assent/consent to participate in the study.

Analysis of dual field notes included daily and weekly re-reading of notes and coding of emerging topics. On the side of the field note, I would write the code or word of the topic such as *consumerism*, *critical literacy*, *my role*, *artifacts*, and *talking*. This coding helped me get started on writing a reflection later in the day. In the reflection, I

tried to give myself permission to write whatever was coming into my head at the time. This writing process gave me an opportunity to take a single topic and write in depth or reflect on something quickly and move onto another topic. I would code the reflections after I wrote them on the first page of the reflection and compare the reflection codes with the dual field note codes to see if topics were evolving into potential themes or patterns. On most reflections, there were 2-3 codes. In several reflections, I referred to research as I was writing and considered these to be “theoretical memos”. I continued to revisit previous dual field notes and reflections before I started a new reflection. Some reflections connected to the previous day’s reflection topics and others generated different topics.

These entries reflect my ongoing and systematic efforts to explain the role of children’s everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices arising during our Morning Meetings, and in relation to my continued reading and thinking about the relevant scholarship in this area. On April 21, 2014, I wrote:

*I could get caught up with the structures of Morning Meeting, but I want to focus more on the underlying values I have about our structure, such as the inclusion of children’s popular/everyday cultural “capital” that includes mass-produced toys/things. Is our classroom community non-judgemental about this? Where do my values fit with this?*

This is an example of the self-reflective nature of my journal reflections, which include speculations, interpretations, ideas as well as thoughts about emerging themes and patterns, methodological issues, possible ethical concerns, opinions, attitudes, and biases.

This self-study was never intended to utilize discourse analysis, wherein I would analyze the structure of language or the details of speech, grammar, gaze, gesture, action and so on (Gee, 2011). I recognize the importance of this and other forms of discourse analysis, and while I share many of Gee's insights into cultural perspectives and identity work, in this study I draw from multiple theoretical reference points.

There are three levels of analysis of the data of Morning Meeting: (1) the immediate field notes of what was said and by whom, with additional comments I added throughout the meeting or shortly after; (2) the journal reflections that were written later on the same day, drawing upon my dual field notes; and, (3) analysis of these two sources of data as a whole, along with my continuing engagement with theoretical readings, resulting in my emerging theory/practice understandings. The recurring topics from my dual field notes and journal reflections are connected to the following ideas:

- The history of Morning Meeting and related concepts of Circle Time, Show and Tell, or Show and Share (April 21)
- Emergent redesign of our Morning Meetings (April 22, April 23)
- My positionality and the roles of the children in Morning Meeting (April 24, May 1, May 5, May 6, May 7)
- Artifacts and stories of children's popular culture (May 1, May 2, May 6, May 7, May 8)
- Criticism of Show and Tell (April 28, April 30)
- Questions of consumption and materialism (April 29, April 30, May 2, May 6, May 8)



- Contributions of my understandings of Morning Meeting to my emerging understandings of literacy theory (April 28, April 29, May 1, May 5, May 6, May 7, May 8, )
- The role of artifacts and talk (April 22, April 23, April 29, April 30)
- And, reflections on what I am calling “smaller every day moments” (May 5).

The ideas listed above depict the themes that emerged from my overall analysis of the dual field notes and reflective journal entries as starting points in my deconstructing my previous understanding, as well as my efforts to reconstruct theoretical constructs that have pushed my thinking about the relationship between children’s everyday out-of-school literacies as they appear in Morning Meeting. I was not looking for final answers to my inquiries about Morning Meeting, but instead I was engaged in a systematic interrogation of my literacy assumptions, beliefs and practices, in an effort to generate new knowledge and to articulate my understandings in a scholarly fashion. All of this engaged me in a deep-thinking exercise in which I considered how I could work with new possibilities and developments that grew out of my scholarly pursuits as I considered my everyday classroom practices.

I noticed that my reflections were often “streams of consciousness” with theoretical memos mingled in. For example, on April 22, I reflected on how our meetings were starting to become longer and I asked the class how they felt about the length of our meeting:

*Today the meeting was taking a long time so I intervened and asked the class what they thought about the length. The majority of the class felt our meetings*

*were just right or too long.... I don't want the timing issue to dictate the quality of sharing, but we have to start somewhere to re-adjust the length of Morning Meeting so that the meeting is efficient.*

Later in the reflection, I explore the question of what my role is in Morning Meeting:

*Sometimes I am involved in questions, comments, and compliments. Other times I am an observer only. What am I saying to the children pedagogically by my stance? Is it similar to my role in literacy practices in other parts of our day?*

This took me back into the work of Hilary Janks (2010) and Barbara Comber (2001) (April 22, 2014):

*Janks and Comber's work keeps me thinking about how the children are reading the classroom text all the time. How I position myself in Morning Meeting speaks to issues of power, ownership, what gets valued, and so on.*

I include this here to show the “hand-in-hand” relationship between my reading of theory and my everyday practices. What I have learned from this in terms of my self-study is how theory and practice are intimately intertwined or entangled.

Lewison, Leland, and Harste's book *Creating Critical Classrooms* (2008) had been foundational in my interrogating what I previously believed about Morning Meeting, and it has continued to inform my new understandings. As a teacher conducting self-study research, I am conscious of how all of my classroom observations are filtered through theoretical lenses, and vice-versa.

Chapter 4 is primarily the third level of analysis, where I systematically analyze the two sources of data of dual field notes and reflections as a whole, along with my continuing engagement with theoretical readings—resulting in my emerging theory/practice understandings. This part of the self-study is the scholarly, systematic analysis of the value and meaning of the role of children's everyday culture in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. My understanding and articulation of the entanglement of theory and practice of Morning Meeting begins with the deconstruction of what I thought I believed about literacy before this self-study, and the changes that evolved out of the data from dual field notes, reflections, and theoretical memos. The two literacy orientations of primary importance for understanding the role of children's everyday cultures in schooled literacy are sociocultural theory and critical literacy.

### **Orientation to Language and Literacy:**

#### **Conceptual Frameworks and Knowledge Sources**

What I believe about how we learn to read and write are always the theoretical underpinnings of Morning Meeting. As an everyday schooled literacy practice, Morning Meeting embodies what I believe is important in literacy teaching and learning. This is one of the main reasons I wanted to do a master's degree in the first place. While I have read extensively, written about my practice, been part of professional learning communities, and presented to other educators, I wanted to be able to explain what I believe and why I believe it, in a scholarly way.

This has not been an easy task for me. When I first started this master's program, I thought that my focus was not on theoretical foundations because many others have done an exquisite job of defining what literacy theory is. However, as I took courses and

wrote pieces about looking closely at my practice, I began to feel that I had something to contribute to this educational conversation. On May 6, I wrote in my reflection:

*Wayne has made me think about “critical literacy” and how that is resurfacing in Morning Meeting. My first thought was “I don’t want to get into all that theoretical rhetoric. Janks, Street, Luke and Freebody, Lewison, Leland and Harste, and Vasquez have already done great work on these theoretical frameworks. Can’t I just say ditto to that in the literature review of my thesis? Then, I paused a bit, because listening to myself made me think about Whitehead’s (1989) notion of “living contradictions” ... I love this phrase because it makes reflexivity sound very organic and malleable or “permeable”, as Dyson (1993) would say. Critical literacy is a core value of mine but I don’t always see myself in some of these interpretations of critical literacy in practice. I think I might have to include myself in the theoretical conversation and try to make sense of how their definitions fit with what I think is important as foundational to the role of children’s everyday cultures in schooled literacy.*

This entry speaks to my developing sense of myself as not just a consumer of research; I was beginning to articulate my desire to be a participant who critiques and produces knowledge about my practice. This is the same encouragement I give to my students about their role in learning. And the scholars I am reading are helping me to find language and structures with which to analyze my work. They are also giving me the confidence to stand and speak up too. After all, this is my practice and I really am the best person to analyze my own experiences. This is a primary goal of this thesis: to define

what I believe, explain it in order to outgrow myself, and possibly to create some new, redesigned questions and understandings.

This self-study is an opportunity for me to deconstruct the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting, in order to be able to identify and reconstruct my larger understandings about how language, literacy and children's everyday cultures fit into schooled literacy practices. I now realize that my organizing theoretical frames include a combination of sociocultural literacy theory and critical literacy, or my own account of critical sociocultural literacy theory. As I've gone through this scholarly researching process, I am finding different explanations of these theoretical foundations and I am beginning to identify the elements that resonate most with me in connection to Morning Meeting.

Although I was already rooted in sociocultural theory and critical literacy, I am trying to be "theory-minded" versus "theory-driven", to address Kenneth Burke's point that, "a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Turner, 1997). Instead of believing there is only one right answer to any question, I am looking for multiple perspectives and explanations, including ways I may or may not want to accept at the moment. I am trying to be consciously aware, as Janks (2010) points out, that "texts have designs on you"—meaning that authors write texts that try to get readers to buy into particular ideas (p. 98). In my reflection journal on May 7, 2014, I wrote:

*Leland, Lewison and Harste (2013) write that readers who are able to size up the situation and draw their own conclusions—become agents of text, since they*

*retain the power to make their own rational decisions about what to believe.*

*Those who don't engage in critical reading are more likely to become victims of text since they tacitly accept assumptions that might not stand up under further scrutiny. (p.4)*

**Theory informed and socioculturally aware:**

**Understanding literacy as a cultural and social practice.**

Morning Meeting allows children to bring in artifacts, talk about experiences that are important to them, and share them in school on a regular basis. In my dual field notes on April 21, 2014, I wrote:

*Morning Meeting has become such an important part of our day that children are upset when we miss one day. We are developing connections with one another, exploring personal knowledge that becomes the shared social knowledge of the group. New ideas or new ways of thinking emerge and spread to different experiences throughout our classroom day. I need to find theoretical constructs that look at literacy in broader terms and take into account the social and cultural practices of our particular classroom.*

*Theoretical frameworks are becoming like glasses for me. They help me to analyze and find the language to explain how there is always so much more beneath the surface. What I want to keep asking myself is how does what happens in Morning Meeting connect to larger theoretical notions of literacy and learning?*

There is a wide range of beliefs about the complexity of literacy and how it is constructed. I am drawn to theoretical and instructional models that take into account that being able to read and write is not enough anymore. Models that seek to understand the social and cultural practices of people from many different backgrounds and experiences resonate with my fundamental beliefs. At the heart of sociocultural theory is the belief that learning is a social process. Children learn to read and write from the social positions they occupy and the types of participation that these roles afford (Gee, 2003; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Street, 2003).

In my reflection of May 8, 2014 I was able to spend more time looking at the research notes from articles I had researched during my data collection period, I summarized the theoretical foundations of sociocultural theory that were underlying Morning Meeting in the following theoretical memo:

*As I continue to review research on sociocultural literacy theory, these aspects are helping me to identify and make explicit the theoretical foundations underlying Morning Meeting:*

- 1. There is an interconnectedness of language, culture, and learning (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Turner, 1997).*
- 2. Children are socialized into culturally defined systems of practice to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language (Halliday, 1977; 1993).*
- 3. People must see themselves in literacy to become literate (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008).*

4. *The deepest learning involves contact and connection (Moll & Greenberg, 1990).*
5. *Language is a tool for social interaction and signals particular identities and group memberships (Gee, 2011, 2012).*
6. *Children learn to read and write from the social positions they occupy and the types of participation those roles afford (Gee, 2003; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Street, 2003).*
7. *We are socialized into multiple literacies, and literacy learning goes beyond the classroom (New London Group, 1996).*
8. *Children and adults are both active agents in language learning (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007).*
9. *Children can be both experts and novices. They assist others and learn from others in ways that build their knowledge and help them to do what they could not do alone (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Turner, 1997).*

**Theoretical Reconsideration of Critical Literacy: A Counter-Narrative That Sees a Different Picture.**

In order to fully analyze the happenings of Morning Meeting, I am starting to rethink core values I thought I held about literacy learning. When I revisited my theoretical belief system before I started my thesis, I felt that critical literacy was the primary lens in which I viewed most educational decisions. But as I deconstruct in order to reconstruct what I believe about language and literacy learning, there seems to be “living contradictions” (Whitehead, 1989) in terms of which critical literacy principles are most pertinent to my theoretical orientation and to my practice. There are parts of



critical literacy theory I can identify with and others that I now question. A more detailed explanation of these critical literacy principles are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. I recognize myself in critical literacy theory. I also see my role in challenging dominant viewpoints and offering counter strategies in issues of critical literacy, in regards to children sharing artifacts and stories of their lives in Morning Meeting.

A counter-narrative is a position that is in tension with another position (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). They are stories that challenge, interrogate, and offer multiple possibilities that are incorporated into new views of teaching, learning, and curriculum. Positions are not static but shift because of acceptance of certain ideas, challenging others, and giving voice to alternative points of view. For me, counter-narratives are not the pitting of one strategy against another, but a way of attempting to make sense for myself and to build my own identity. There is an element of gentle defiance and resistance, but to a greater degree I am trying to locate myself within the critical literacy “whole”.

***Critical literacy framework of Lewison, Leland, and Harste.***

Over the years, Mitzi Lewison, Chris Leland and Jerome Harste’s work in critical literacy was a primary focus in my curricular conscience (2008, 2013). Jerome Harste has been one of the most influential teachers in my educational life. At an NCTE conference around 2007 or 2008, I was in the audience when Lewison, Leland, and Harste presented a version of their critical literacy framework and were looking for feedback. I put up their definition of critical literacy in my classroom to remind me of some of the things to consider when I am making pedagogical decisions. On my first reflection (April 28,

2014), I wrote about how I copied out Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008) definition on my dual field note that day as a reference point for my data collection period:

*On my dual field note today, I wrote down the definition for critical literacy in the margin to keep it front and centre. I know there is value and meaning in Morning Meeting, but is it really critical literacy in practice? By rereading these points in the definition I hope it will keep me focussed on looking for examples to delve further into. This definition has been so important to my theoretical understandings. That is not to say that all parts of my practice are in-line with this thinking. Personal artifacts and stories that are tangled up in children's lives find a way into school in Morning Meeting and I think my role is to help them entangle them in school. I say I believe in critical literacy, but can I explain why and how it relates to Morning Meeting?*

Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008) definition of critical literacy is as follows:

critical literacy encourages students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice ... critical literacies have focussed on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relations in place. (p. 3)

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) have developed an instructional model of critical literacy instruction that helps me explain some of the complexities of the role of children's everyday literacies and literacy learning in Morning Meeting. The three

components of Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008; 2013) model of critical literacy instruction are: personal and cultural resources, critical social practices, and critical stance. In their book, *Creating Critical Classrooms* (2008), Leland, Lewison, and Harste used vignettes written by classroom teacher-researchers; each considered to be "exemplary" instances of critical literacy practice. Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2008) use a vignette of Lee Heffernan's Morning Meeting as a demonstration of "exemplary critical literacy practices" that incorporate the three components in action in daily school life. Heffernan decided to transform her morning meeting to better reflect her views of critical literacy curriculum and instruction. Heffernan's previous Morning Meeting included Show-and-Tell. She "decided against the sharing of personal artifacts in Morning Meeting" (2003, p. 4). Heffernan wanted to move away from a "consumerist forum" into a meeting that "could address political, as opposed to personal, issues" (2003, p. 4). Heffernan's vignette and Lewison, Leland, and Harste's response to this vignette—viewed through the lenses of their three components of critical literacy—provides me with viewpoints of critical literacy in a Morning Meeting that challenge understandings I have of our Morning Meeting as a site of critical literacy. Heffernan's meeting is an important point of reference and is discussed in greater detail throughout this chapter.

*Component 1: Personal and cultural resources.*

There are three important factors about children's personal resources that inform Morning Meeting: I believe students are knowledgeable, capable of doing many things, and bring a wide range of experiences of value to our class. My job is to acknowledge these "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005), find ways for children to

use these resources, and find a place of prominence for them in the classroom. In Morning Meeting, I focus on trying to unlock and capitalize on the knowledge children already possess. In my field notes and reflections, I document children's competence and knowledge and am discovering how this systematic way to represent children's resources opens up many possibilities for pedagogical actions in other parts of our day. For example, in my dual field notes on May 5, 2014, Steven told us about a SUV he saw from a car show he was at and gave a detailed description of the colour of the exterior and interior. In my reflection later the next day (May 6, 2014), I wrote about how the comment informed a curriculum decision:

*I put a quick notation for myself on the field note to go back to this comment later. I reviewed that comment and planned a colour naming session for literacy workshop. We are also studying colour in art. Today in Literacy Workshop we went back to Steven's comment and renamed colour swatches we had from the paint store from a previous project and glued them in our Writer's Notebooks.*

Students and teachers draw on various resources to create literacy learning opportunities from inside and outside of school walls. These literacy learning opportunities include ways into official school curriculum, inter- and intrapersonal understandings, identity construction, power, agency, privilege, and access (Janks, 2010).

Educators have different perspectives on the value of children's culture in school. In Leonie Arthur's (2005) study of the views of parents and educators about the role of popular culture in children's literacy learning, many parents viewed popular culture positively. Educators were less enthusiastic and saw a negative impact of television,

media, computers, and video. Other issues educators were concerned with were racism, gendered roles, violence and consumerism.

Inviting children's everyday cultural knowledge and experiences from outside of school into the classroom is seen by some as positive and is seen as negative by others. Some educators include some types of experiences and exclude others based on their personal beliefs about what types of funds of knowledge are valuable and which ones are not. There are different ways of using children's everyday cultures to promote critical literacy practice because educators have had different experiences and purposes in engaging in this type of work. Heffernan sees political issues as the foundation of her Morning Meeting. I see personal issues as the core of our Morning Meeting. In the beginning of the data collection phase, I was still a bit unsure of how to reflect and write dual field notes that would be meaningful for a thesis. I started with writing about the process of taking dual field notes and reflections. In my dual field note on April 29, 2014 I had time right after the Morning Meeting and wrote a short note about the day's field note:

*Field notes include what children talked about on that day. There are no restrictions. We don't have a list of what you can talk about and what you can't talk about. Today there was a range of topics, which is typical of most days. This is what these kids "know" about. This is what kids are "passionate" about. This is what "interests" them. Steven likes to talk about what he watched on the news with his mom. Katie talks about her lip balm that is in the shape of an ice cream cone. It's all relevant and personal.*

I see the everyday lived experiences of children as strengths and resources for pedagogical work in the class. Children's learning happens because of many factors, from inside and outside school walls. A funds of knowledge approach is a belief in nurturing children's strengths and resources they acquire from many contexts and places. González, Moll & Amanti (2005) base the concepts of funds of knowledge on the belief that:

People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge.... These are people living, working, thinking, worrying, and caring. In the course of their lives, as individuals and as a group, they constitute households that have generated and accumulated a variety of funds of knowledge that are the intellectual residues of their activities. (p. x)

The primary premise of this theoretical approach is to theorize everyday practices to understand the "messiness of ordinary life" or the ways in which people make sense of their everyday lives (p. 1). Educators' roles are "not just to elicit information, but to foster a relationship of trust with families so they can tell us about their lives and experiences" (p. xi). By focussing more of the processes or practices of everyday life, educators can learn how people use resources of all kinds, prominently their funds of knowledge, and use them for classroom teaching (p. x).

The pedagogical implication of knowing and valuing children's everyday knowledge and experiences includes finding ways to document these funds of knowledge to be resources in teaching and learning. González, Moll & Amanti, (2005) believe that:

the more that participants can engage and identify with the topic matter, the more interest and motivation they will have.... We may not always agree with what we

hear, but our role is to understand how others make sense of their lives. Sense-making processes may be contradictory or ambiguous, but in one way or another, understanding what makes sense to others is what we are about. (p. 9)

Children have voices of their own and should be listened to with seriousness and respect. They should be actively involved in dialogue and decision-making. One of the foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach is its “image” of the child (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2008). At the center of the Reggio Emilia is the belief that children are capable and full of potential to actively co-construct understandings of the world around them and not just as empty passive vessels to be filled by others.

Children also have many ways to express themselves. In the words of Loris Malaguzzi, the inspiration behind the educational experiences in Reggio Emilia, Italy:

A child has got a hundred languages and is born with a lot of possibilities and a lot of expressions and potentials, which stimulate each other—but which they are easily deprived of through the education system. As such, the young child should be taken seriously. Active and competent, he or she has ideas and theories that are not only worth listening to, but also merit scrutiny, and, where appropriate, questioning and challenge.” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2008, p. 50)

*New understandings of Morning Meeting.*

Prior to this study, I understood Morning Meeting to be a schooled literacy practice where children are able to illuminate aspects of their childhood. It is a school construct to build on children’s desires to bring personal objects and stories about their lives. When I understand the world children live in, it becomes easier to connect with

them—socially, emotionally, and plan curricular engagements. I want to get as close as I can to these children. The strings that tie us together must be strong, like strings that bind families or mothers and children to deepen our roots together.

I want children to think of our class as a home away from home and part of their circle of influence in their life. Therefore, I need to find ways to respect who they are, what they know, what their life is like, and the things and experiences of their everyday life. Popular culture, which includes toys and media, are part of their lives. I want to include them because if they are not part of school in some way, our life in the class distances children from their home cultures and potentially rich literacy sources.

Going back through my reflections, I addressed several different issues related to the children's everyday cultures and the valuing and devaluing of their role in Morning Meeting. On April 28, 2014 I wrote in a dual field note:

*This notion of consumerism is on my mind because the children are bringing things into Morning Meeting that fascinate them. While this brings consumption into focus, I want to keep in mind that children's culture is complex and not always simply about materialism or mass-produced treasures. My hope is that Morning Meeting opens up possibilities for kids to share what's going on in their lives. Where does critical literacy then fit into this? Just emptying their pockets is something. But what other opportunities for conversation does this afford the children and me as a teacher? Popular culture for kids is multilayered. What we are doing in Morning Meeting is not simply propagating more consumerism. We*



*are exploring together questions about when consumerism is good, not good, and who decides? Is it all right for my biases to show? How do I show them?*

On April 29, I wrote in a dual field note:

*We live in a media-rich, consumerist culture where some believe kids are too materialistic and over-commercialized. I too am concerned with the onslaught of consumer culture/commercialization as I participate in it. Kids know who does more, has more, or has the newest or latest or best. Morning Meeting is a schooled practice that possibly is a microcosm of real life. This is a school practice. It is a construct of school for kids to walk into. But what is my role to serve as a bridge from school to out-of-school? Clearly there is some materialism or marketing (or greed?) present in our discourse. Yah, it's there but what about it? Isn't this part of the social world the children and their families (like mine) travel in?.... I think I need to look at advertising, corporate tactics/ethics, and consumerism and look beyond or deeper than this too. I don't think this is the only value/meaning to discuss when sharing kids artifacts and stories of their lives in school. I think that Morning Meeting gives us the "after party" or the remnants of how that child is making meaning out of her or his life. What I want to do is to help the children think more deeply about the decisions they make as they decide what to share, and in light of what ensues from that decision in our conversations.*

On April 30, 2014, I continued in a dual field note:

*The significance of Morning Meeting is deeper than buying, consuming, and materialism. It is more about the meaning and value attached to what they are*

*sharing and a sense of belonging. Many children want their chance, where all eyes are on them because they want to share something that means something to them and the people in the meeting. We can sit for 45 minutes, wiggle, squirm, interrupt, talk with our friends, and still want Morning Meeting to continue. It has become a tie that binds us together. But why?*

I see myself focusing on the theories of children's culture that are less about definitions of what culture is and more about the practices of children's culture—how children in our class view the world, what they do and how they think about what they do in the world. I am doing this to improve my teaching practice. Often times the term “culture” suggests that there is coherence within groups of children, which does not necessarily exist in our class community. Instead, I focus more on theorizing the practice of Morning Meeting and how the children must see themselves in literacy to become literate through the sharing of artifacts and experiences of their everyday lives in school.

We are “ruled” by our cultures, convictions, passions, belief systems, and interests. Children come to school from different backgrounds and experiences, which may give them advantages or possibly marginalize them. Popular culture is present in children's worlds and can serve as an important resource. Toys and children's media are some of the cultural artifacts children use to make meaning in their everyday lives. Popular media and “transmedia” toys are key texts in the social construction of modern childhood; these transmedia toys are defined as “licensed popular media franchises of toys, entertainment products, and consumer goods” (Wohlwend, 2013, p. 1). Arthur (2005) warns educators to help children critique media and consumer culture without “taking away children's pleasure in texts of popular culture nor impose their own views on children” (p. 179).

The stuff of children's everyday cultures involves commercialized, mass produced objects that are value-laden for multiple reasons. As noted, I keep bumping into issues of materialism and consumption when talking about children's everyday cultures in the classroom. And the scholarly literature reflects different perspectives on these issues. Daniel Miller is a leading scholar in material studies, who addresses these dilemmas of materialism and consumption (2012). Miller defines a consumer society as: "one in which commodities are increasingly used to express the core values of that society but also become the principle form through which people come to recognise and understand those values" (2012, p. 40). As an anthropologist, he reminds us that other societies in the world, from ancient times to contemporary life, from capitalist to socialist countries, and from those who have much to those who have few material things, have been immersed in issues of consumerism and materialism. Miller sees both the positive and negative consequences of consumerism. He does not reduce the issues of consumerism to one stance but because it is so complex, he suggests different stances: "I can see the merits in a variety of equally powerful and persuasive positions, and trying to wish away that diversity of argument and pretend to stand for only one position would be false" (2012, p. vi). According to Miller (2012), the study of consumerism is often reduced to "moral adjudication or political stance" (p. ix), but is really about other things in play. Miller posits that by trying to prove something, we may miss trying to understand it. He focuses more on "what consumption is rather than what we would like it to be" (p. x). Miller studies material things and their impact in our social and personal lives. He tries to acknowledge, respect, and expose materiality rather than deny it: "a more profound appreciation of things will lead to a more profound appreciation of persons" (2010, p. 6).

In my reflection on April 28, 2014, I again looked closer at the nature of what was being shared:

*Were our Meetings all about consumption and materialistic fervour? When I sampled the topics of a particular meeting, 4 out of 18 topics included artifacts (3 hockey cards and 1 umbrella). The children in our class have many material things but what we share most are the events and happenings of our lives. This day's meeting topics were: dog stories, outings with grandparents, injuries, hockey, new babies, dreams, stitches, birthday parties, Minecraft details, trampolines, and books.*

A few days later, I asked the class how they get ready to share in Morning Meeting (April 30, 2014). My first question was:

*Do you think you need to buy something to share and/or do you bring/talk about something you already have? 1 out of 22 people said when it comes to hockey cards, they ask their parents to buy some because then they have more hockey cards. These are some of the other responses:*

- *I choose something I think others would enjoy finding out about.*
- *I bring or talk about what I know kids are already interested in.*
- *I bring something unique that people haven't seen before.*
- *I look around my home, my room, and my toy room.*
- *I bring something that is special to me that I think others will like.*

There is a wide range of acceptance of children's artifacts and personal stories in school practices. I have heard several educators criticize the idea of having children bring personal artifacts in school. Some teachers prefer that toys and personal objects stay at

home. Some make space in the curriculum, such as during reading and writing workshops, that value children's everyday cultural stories and artifacts, and there are those educators who do not make space. In my own school division, there are levels of influence and power among teachers. I wanted to be able to find out for myself, based on my experiences and theoretical understandings of my class, what role consumption, consumerism, and materialism played in Morning Meeting.

This data showed me that artifacts (some of which were mass-produced) were part of Morning Meetings, but the significant topics of discussion focused on children's stories of what was happening in their lives. What was actually shared was less to do with accumulation, consumption, and materialism, and more to do with finding ways to connect to the people in our class in a meaningful way. After looking at what children think about when they decide to what to bring/talk about in Morning Meeting, like Miller (2010, 2012), I believe children were trying to find ways to appreciate what others were sharing, which was leading to a deeper appreciation of the people in our class. What we shared in the beginning of the year evolved as we got to know and trust each other more. In the beginning there were many more things that people brought in because artifacts are something you could see, feel, and talk about. Now we were in a place where we had a class history of what was shared and a greater feeling of intimacy and safety with each other.

Play involving popular cultural artifacts allows children to organize their identities in pleasurable ways and these warm feelings contribute to potentially deeper engagement in literacy events. In the past, stories had to be told or written, published and purchased in book form to be read aloud to children or read independently. Now because of the media

advancements in film, video, and on the computer, young children can own, enjoy, and replay stories in different forms over and over again. Children and adults are attracted to the satisfaction and pleasures that popular cultural artifacts bring to them. A great story grabs us and we often like to repeat the experience again and again in safe and secure ways. Thinking of the movie “Frozen”, and the number of children who know the words to all the songs and dress like characters Anna and Elsa, brings joy, comfort and happiness to many of the children.

Children are actively engaged with popular cultural texts and not just passive consumers of that text. In order to deepen their understandings, however, children must be involved in intentional exchanges of how to be critically conscious as literacy users and producers. They need space, time, moral challenges, and literacy practices inside the classroom to help empower them to be able to analyze texts, and take on different positions and opinions, and to construct a growing critical consciousness in and out of school.

But the point I want to make is that there are considerable forces, a multileveled complexity, at work in children’s cultural lives. The features of the toy and media industry, with their sophisticated knowledge of the child consumer, raise important issues for parents and educators. There are concerns about the threatened nature of childhood because of the amount, power, and persuasiveness of popular culture aimed at young children, as well as its effects on literacy in schools. The implications of gendering, positioning, and potentially oppressive features of many aspects of popular culture should not prevent us from the inclusion of popular culture in school. Exploring these structures

with children, as co-constructors of knowledge, may, indeed, give them a deeper understanding of the popular culture industry's effects on them.

These conflicting and contradictory messages in children's everyday cultures connect them to larger societal structures. According to Hilton (1996), research suggests that mass culture leading to mass thinking and manipulation is an inaccurate assumption (p. 36). We may belong to certain classes, genders, age groups, and ethnicities, but we do not all think and act alike. Humans are complex beings and people's personalities are deeper than what appears on the surface. People hold various positions and identities and engage in making multiple meanings from everyday cultural materials. Our identities, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts vary constantly, lie deep within individuals and shift at different times and in different areas of our lives.

The paradox of mass media toys is something that also must be considered. The relationship with popular culture in school is symbiotic: children are positioned by pop culture but also have the potential to shape or reconstruct it. As Jackie Marsh (2005) puts it: "Culture is also produced, not simply consumed. Although children's culture is often shaped by adults and taken up by children (or not, as the case may be) in various ways, children also create their own, child-centered cultural practices" (p. 3).

The educational community in which students live extends far beyond the walls of the school. On May 2, 2014, I reflected on how the artifacts and stories that children share are a bridge into children's peer communities and create a sense of belonging:

*Morning Meeting is a way children experience a sense of community. Kids want to have a sense of belonging with others in the classroom. We are*

*social beings with a longing to belong (to something and with others). The classroom is a space where individuality and community are valued. I think a part of children's sense of connecting to others has to do with having the same goods and experiences as others—"connection through similarity" (Pugh, 2009, p. 216).*

It is undeniable that children's culture is immersed in media, popular culture, and transmedia. Children read popular media toys as texts for story-making and identity construction as well as to gain access to peer groups and to assume and assign identities (Wohlwend, 2013). Children's status in the class and on the playground is also affected by their ability to participate through popular culture. Karen Wohlwend (2005) studied young children's recess play over one year and found that children's knowledge of popular media texts (popular media play themes and materials) act as important tools to build friendships, peer acceptance, access play groups, and gain social status. She noted that children did not need to own or hold the actual toy, but they needed knowledge of popular toys and to share popular toys with friends to be accepted by the group.

Allison Pugh (2009) studied what buying means to parents and children. She found that children's desires for material things are more connected to a desire to belong and connect with other children than a need to consume and buy more things. Children's sense of connecting to others has more to do with having the same goods and experiences as others, or a "connection through similarity" (Pugh, 2009, p. 216). For families in Pugh's study of parents, children, and consumer culture, children's consumption habits are affected by corporate marketing, but their greater concern was that difference posed the biggest challenge to children's participation in their social world. Having similar



goods and experiences can serve as “bridges into children’s peer communities” (Pugh, 2009, p. 216). Pugh believes the differences between families must be acknowledged. Teachers need to “help students understand their feelings and interactions about these differences ...teach children to resolve conflicts and handle difference constructively. Research shows that children’s peer cultures respond to efforts by caring leaders to model positive behaviours” (2009, p. 221).

Christian and Bloome (2004) explored how children’s friendships are key components in the classroom social history that influence who can take up key leadership roles and literate identities in school. They believe that social dynamics in the classroom are keys to a child’s development as a reader and writer as well as the development of a child’s social identity as a student, reader, and writer. The distribution of “symbolic power” (Christian & Bloome, 2004) in classroom social interactions affects students’ social identities. Symbolic power refers to who has high status and prestige in the classroom. In their view, there is a close connection between learning to read and write and social identity.

Christian and Bloome (2004) point out how some learners find school fun and exciting. Others find parts of learning difficult and disheartening. Sometimes, those who are able readers and writer receive affirmation and some kind of status. This status is called “symbolic capital” or the privileged social status and position that a person may have within a particular situation gained through social interaction (Bourdieu, 1994):

Symbolic capital is socially constructed by how people interact with each other, by the social organization of events, and by how events play out. Symbolic capital

is situational. The symbolic capital assigned to a person in one situation may not necessarily carry over into other situations.... Symbolic capital is part of the process by which people let each other know who they are, where they stand in relation to one other, and what privileges and constraints they can assume.

(Christian & Bloome, 2004, p. 386)

Christian and Bloome believe that symbolic capital must be analyzed in connection to *cultural capital*, *linguistic capital*, and *economic capital* (Bourdieu, 1991). Both students and teachers are influential in establishing a classroom culture and ultimately active in the distribution of social capital. Cultural capital in the classroom refers how well students understand what occurs in the classroom and appropriately and effectively engage in the events and practices (such as morning meeting, literacy workshop, etc.). Both teachers and students influence the social organization of the classroom and how curriculum evolves. In our room, all students used English as a first language: therefore, linguistic capital in Morning Meeting referred more to how well students communicated using the language practices we established as a collective in Morning Meeting. Economic capital in Morning Meeting for students may be connected more to their families and parents and the materials and experiences they shared with the rest of the class. Those students with valued cultural and linguistic capital may have influenced who had or did not have symbolic capital as well as how students were socially positioned (Christian & Bloome, 2004, p. 382).

If you have symbolic power you have high status and prestige in the classroom. In most classrooms, there are students who are marginalized and stay on the margins while others with “valued” capital gain status and power and stay at the top of the social

hierarchy. It becomes an issue of access to symbolic power. Christian and Bloome (2004) challenge teachers to examine and dissect classroom practices to determine how these practices allow children to “buy” or are prevented from “buying” valued cultural and symbolic capital and how these transactions affect “who students are” and how “who they are” affects classroom transactions.

Morning Meeting is a way children experience a connection to our class community. Children want to have a sense of belonging with others in the class. We are social beings with a longing to belong to something. The classroom is a cultural landscape where individuality and community are valued. I think part of children’s sense of connection with others has to do with the symbolic power and capital they have access to when they have similar things or interested in similar things as others. A hockey card, talk about Super Mario, and Rainbow Loom bracelets are inexpensive, quick, accessible ways for young children to connect to each other. These things are part of children’s everyday worlds and they can be something that starts a conversation between people who are learning how to be friends. For some parents who may worry that their child’s uniqueness might alienate their child, that wrestling figure might break down barriers faster than anything else ever could.

Most boys in the class love sports and were involved in some kind of sport like hockey, soccer, baseball or football. On May 1, 2014 I wrote about Simon, a boy whose family situation was very different than most in the classroom:

*Simon rarely talks in Morning Meeting and ‘passes’ when it is his turn to share. I notice that he wears a lot of wrestling shirts. Recently I asked him if he had any*

*wrestling figures and if could he bring one to show me. Simon got very excited and started to tell me all about his wrestlers. A few days later, he brought in the Undertaker. I asked him to share it during Morning Meeting. He talked briefly and hands shot up to talk with him. Who knew we had so many wrestling fans. Simon continued to share his wrestling knowledge and expertise. He started to play with his wrestlers and ring at Exploration. Others started to bring in their wrestling stuff and Simon started to play with them.*

Simon gained cultural, social and symbolic capital, a greater sense of identity, belonging and status in our class from a wrestler that cost maybe \$5.00. We were able to establish other ways into other literacy practices because of Simon's wrestler, which became a badge of belonging for him (Pugh, 2009).

*Component 2: Critical social practices.*

Learning is an active process that allows children choice and agency through collaboration and learning from and with others (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2013). Critical social practices are the practices that children and teachers engage in as they create curricula in the school day. In my practice, curriculum is seen as a negotiation between what children want to learn and my own goals. In Morning Meeting, these practices, based on beliefs and theory, matter to the children and me because they are our creation. Curriculum in Morning Meeting involves topics that surround children's lives and we are making it a part of schooled social practices.

Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2008, 2013) identify four dimensions of critical social practice after using a review of definitions of critical literacy in research over the

last thirty years (Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002, cited in Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 3). They acknowledge their model of critical literacy is one of many interpretations and not a finite set of practices. It is meant as tool to use in planning critical literacy curriculum. The four dimensions of critical social practice are:

1. Disrupting the commonplace (questioning what is taken for granted);
2. Interrogating multiple viewpoints (seeing topics from different perspectives);
3. Focussing on socio-political issues (who is benefitting and who id disadvantaged or marginalized); and
4. Taking action to promote social justice.

*Dimension 1: Disrupting the commonplace.*

Disrupting the commonplace is an interrogation of the everyday world of routines, habits and beliefs or what's considered "normal" or "just the way things are.". Earlier I discussed how Heffernan decided to transform her meeting because she felt it did not reflect her beliefs of critical literacy:

Morning meeting is a time for building classroom community, an opportunity to address important personal as well as political issues. Though I shared this vision with my students, many still saw morning meeting as a type of show and tell. The meeting sometimes evolved into a consumerist forum as kids brought in prized possessions and the rest of the class looked on with envy. We sat watching as classmates displayed and described trendy artifacts, rare baseball cards, and trip souvenirs. (Heffernan, in Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2008, p. 1)

Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2008) go on to explain the problematic nature of the “extremely ritualized classroom structure” of show-and-tell or morning meeting:

We believe that no curricular practices are neutral and unproblematic. This is especially true for those taken-for-granted powerful school structures like morning meeting that are historically embedded, appear to be innocent, and take place in classrooms day after day, week after week, year after year. This traditional version of morning meeting prepares children for a transmission model of education, not a critical one. And it is not only the children who are compliant in accepting the dominant discourses, subjectivities, and ideologies that are constructed in common curricular practices like morning meeting, but so are we, as teachers. (p. 9)

*My new understandings of Morning Meeting.*

I’ve changed the term from “disrupt the commonplace” to “interrupt the commonplace” on purpose. Sometimes you don’t have to completely “blow something up” to find out what’s valuable inside. I interrupted the commonplace of Morning Meeting by “interrogating the status quo,” without changing those very structures that Heffernan revised. On April 24, 2014, I reflected on the redesign of Morning Meeting in response to how my data collection and reflections were informing my understandings of interrupting the commonplace:

*Should I be looking at ways to redesign the existing Morning Meeting to focus less on the traditional notion of Show-and-Tell and incorporate other ideas into this time? By documenting the children’s production and participation in a*

*“shared childhood culture” of Morning Meeting, am I distorting or misinterpreting what I don’t understand by forcing it into an adult, school perspective and practice? Morning Meeting—is it childhood culture or more of a schooled literacy practice where kids are able to participate to illuminate aspects of their childhood culture? Is there authenticity of children’s everyday culture and/or do I need to overhaul the structure to create something more like Heffernan’s?*

In my dual field note of May 2, 2014, I thought about the implications of studying Morning Meeting as a potential site of interruption in practice:

*I am hoping that looking critically at my Morning Meeting in my thesis reframes the debate about children’s everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices. I am taking a common schooled practice of “Show-and-Tell”, a practice teachers are very familiar with and often goes unattested, and saying that it is critical literacy in practice, it has meaning and value, and why.*

My viewpoint is different than Heffernan’s: I think that our traditional ritualized structure of show-and-tell is a “space where members of the classroom community share information that is of value and concern to all present” (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2008, p. xiii). Children’s everyday cultural lives include “the mainstream propaganda dished up by television news, curriculum departments, and presidents” (Leland, Lewison, & Harste, 2008, p. xiii). My goal was not to dismantle Morning Meeting, but to deconstruct it to find out why this type of structure was valued so deeply by the children and myself.

*Dimension 2: Interrogating multiple viewpoints.*

Lewison, Leland and Harste (2008) advocate for using various ways to try to understand and empathize with others' perspectives or those who may be under- or misrepresented. It's about trying to walk in someone else's footsteps and to understand different points of view. For a teacher-researcher, as well as for young children, critical social practices, such as in Morning Meeting, can be complicated and messy endeavours where efforts are made to make sense of multiple and possibly contradictory perspectives.

Thinking about whose voices are heard and whose might be missing draws attention to finding ways to involve multiple points of view and experiences that previously might not have been prominent in traditional school literacy practices. Taking a critical literacy perspective includes creating conditions where diversity or difference is part of the norm in classroom; these are conditions that make it okay to be different from everyone else and still be an important member of the class community. Classrooms should be places where different values, ideas, and experiences are celebrated, interrogated, and acted on. Such a stance allows children to explore issues not just in the lives of others but in their own lives as well. Lewison, Leland and Harste (2008) point out that: "By encouraging students to pay attention to multiple perspectives and realities, these teachers seek to make difference visible—creating a curriculum that honors and highlights difference rather than one that strives for consensus and conformity" (p. 10).



*My new understandings of Morning Meeting.*

There are benefits to exploring multiple perspectives, diversity, and seeing difference but there is more to these issues. According to Harste (2008), not all perspectives are equal, and we need to keep in mind whether multiple insights really makes a practical difference in classroom life for both teachers and children. The notion of equity and giving voice to those who has been silenced or marginalized, are a few of the reasons for creating opportunities to share out-of-school literacies in schooled literacy practices such as Morning Meeting. On May 1, 2014, I wrote about inequity and artifacts in a reflection:

*Are there issues of inequity in Morning Meeting? Do kids see it that way? By trying to understand how and why consumer culture permeates the lives and relationships as seen in Morning Meeting, we have an opportunity to address the issues that such consumption engenders. Will it all happen in Morning Meeting or do we explore issues of consumption, materialism, gender, and violence in other parts of our day? Artifacts and stories are ways into or that provide access to many things like out-of-school lives and potential equity concerns, because we are inviting in those things that kids value and sending them messages that we care about what's important to you—whether it's a broken nutcracker your grandma gave you or brand new "Hulk hands".*

I believe that Morning Meeting provides a potential site for opportunities of equity and for giving voice to children who may have felt marginalized, misrepresented, or underrepresented. By combining the modalities of a traditional schooled literacy

practice of show-and-tell with oral literacy, artifacts, and objects from children's lives outside of the classroom, Morning Meeting becomes a schooled literacy practice where issues of equity and differences are part of the social and cultural fabric of our classroom.

Morning Meeting is a site to understand the social and cultural practices of children from different backgrounds and experiences. Talk is one of the best ways to forge understandings among people and an essential ingredient as I try to enlarge our understanding of diversity in school. Story connects our lives out-of-school with our lives at school through Morning Meeting. Conversation, dialogue, story, and artifacts are important aspects of social practices we engage in during Morning Meeting that help us learn about each other and come to trust one another. Through dialogue, new ideas and meanings emerge.

*Dimension 3: Focussing on socio-political issues.*

According to critical literacy researchers, literacy is tied to notions of power and that how we teach is political (Janks, 2010). I wrote a theoretical memo on May 8, 2014 that explored how Hilary Janks believes there is a difference between "Politics with a capital P", "little p politics", and how this issue connects to Morning Meeting:

*Hilary Janks' (2010) reminds me that there are multiple ways to look at the notion of politics:*

*The little p politics is about the micro-politics of everyday life. It is about the minute-by-minute choices and decisions that make us who we are. It is about desire and fear; how we construct them and how they construct us. It is about the politics of identity and place; it is about small triumphs and*

*defeats; it is about winners and losers, haves and have-nots, school bullies and their victims; it is about how we treat other people day by day: it is about whether or not we learn someone else's language or recycle our own garbage. Little p politics is about taking seriously the feminist perspective that the personal is the political (p. 188).*

*The key difference between our Morning Meeting and Heffernan's is that we are "little p politics" where the "personal is the political" and Heffernan's is "Politics with a capital P" or the big stuff or worldly concerns. That is not to say the "Politics with a capital P" is not important. It just means that in Morning Meeting, "little p politics" are valuable and the focus of this time and space. Power and inequity are dealt with in ways that are different than Heffernan because of the involvements of personal, everyday cultural stories and artifacts.*

Lewison, Leland and Harste (2008) encourage educators to look at how privilege, power and injustice impact life in the classroom. It's not enough just to include multiple viewpoints, but attention should be paid to who benefits and who might be disadvantaged by the literacy practices in the classroom. Heffernan, along with Lewison, Leland & Harste (2008), believes that traditional show-and tell actually marginalizes students:

Show-and-tell practices privilege those students who have lots of cool stuff to bring to class and share. It marginalizes students who do not have these high-status items or experiences to present to their peers. We all have memories of students who felt they had to fabricate stories to gain prestige among their peers

during show and tell, and sadly, these episodes usually ended disastrously for the student. (p. 9)

*New understandings of Morning Meeting.*

However, power does not only flow in one linear direction in the classroom and people who may be disadvantaged or marginalized are not automatically victimized or powerless (Moje, 2000). On May 1, 2014, I wrote about how I understood that there are power structures in our class in a journal reflection:

*Who am I in Morning Meeting? Am I trying to be a "big kid" trying to find ways to connect to the rest of kids in our class? What about my roles as a researcher, teacher, person, observer, and participant? How active or controlling should I be in Morning Meeting, and with the children in general? As an adult and teacher, I am more sophisticated in developing the learning potential of the conversation and interaction with the kids. Kids are always participating and are part of many cultures (school, peers, family, religious, ethnicity, etc.); these cultures are interwoven. I think artifacts and stories give kids access to gaining power and a sense of belonging with others. I have to find out what kinds of power/capital/value/meaning we are creating access to in Meeting and how to explain that in theoretical terms. I have the feeling that the capital/power of popular cultural items need to be made visible and named to achieve status in literacy theory as a way of accessing power and promoting a culture of acceptance/diversity in a school literacy practice.*

There are traditional power relations in our classroom that are maintained and challenged on a daily basis. The children and I are both complicit in maintaining certain constraining power relations, but we can also both contribute to challenging and transforming power relations. As a “critical literacy” teacher this is part of my responsibility. I want to be thoughtful about the complexity of power and how it shows itself in multiple ways. I want to think about how identities also shift from moment-to-moment. I am enlarging my thinking so that I think about how systems, institutions, and structures ultimately shape access and opportunity in everyday life. Power is potentially constraining and restrictive, but it can also be productive. Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2007) argue:

that power is produced and enacted in and through discourses, relationships, activities, spaces, and times *by people* as they compete for access to and control of resources, tools, identities.... as a result of interactions and relationships, rather than an entity that is possessed by some and desired or resisted by others. ( p. 17)

The schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting is a primary way for children to engage and understand the world around them. It is also a means of access to power and capital that is directly connected to how they experience the world. The habitual nature of sharing their lives outside of school inside school demonstrates the potential curricular value of children’s knowledge as a core literacy. There is no escaping the realities of societal influences of popular culture in children’s lives. However, young children are not small adults. Wohlwend (2013) reminds us about the powerful plethora of experiences in children’s everyday lives have currency in their own right and can become natural starting points in school to help them grow as richly literate people:

Children's play worlds are storied worlds with texts filled with vibrant dialogue, characters, and story lines. During play, children make their own imaginary versions of real-life or fantasy worlds but on their own terms, which allows them to make friendships and remake stories to fit their needs. Children's play reflects their immersion in a stream of commercial messages and advertising, including narratives from popular television shows, movies, video games, and toy franchises. (p. vii)

Two people who think in terms of critical literacy can look at the same situation and view it differently. Lee Heffernan views Show-and-Tell as a marginalizing consumerist forum and wanted a "space where members of the classroom community share information that is of value and concern to all present" (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008, p. 9). However, I see our Morning Meeting as a space where we share information of value and concern to those present. I stand with Wohlwend (2013) when she suggests that young children see the world differently and critical approaches need to take that into consideration. Wohlwend challenges early years educators to create schooled literacy practices that fit the abilities and strengths of young children:

Critical approaches seem to have limited impact when pitted against young children's passionate identification with their favorite princesses and superheroes, which are highly valued in their peer cultures ... criticality must be reconceptualised for early childhood. Children's responses that seem critical in class discussions may not transfer to their writings or, more important, to their playing of narratives they know by heart. Early critical literacy begins with an awareness that media's pervasive texts are malleable and can be reinvented by

children in collaborative stories, and that such reconstructions happen regularly and naturally in children's play (Wohlwend, 2013, pp. vii-viii)

Morning Meeting is a place to explore the socio-political dimensions of critical literacy foundations of identity, agency, and power. By inviting children to bring artifacts from their everyday cultures and by making time to talk about these artifacts as a schooled literacy practice, Morning Meeting becomes a space that fit the abilities, strengths, and experiences of the children in my class. Morning Meeting is a critical literacy practice because we create opportunities for those who previously might not have been connected to other school literacy practices. It can provide help for children to gain access to capital, power, identity, and agency through talking and sharing artifacts of their real life outside of school. The habitual sharing, as a schooled literacy practice of things and experiences of value to children, sends the intended message that all children in our class are knowledgeable, that their knowledge is valuable and that it has currency. I wrote down what they were sharing, children talked to each other during and after their share, and these sharing sessions then took on importance as part of our classroom history, culture, and community.

On April 30, 2014, I came to an important understanding in my reflection that pushed me to look for additional research to help me understand the relationship to artifacts and stories in Morning Meeting:

*Children talk about all kinds of things and find ways to bring stuff that's important to them to school whether they are allowed to or not. By creating time and space for sharing about themselves, children can count on a regular*

*opportunity to be heard, watched, acknowledged, and thought about by an audience of their peers and their teacher. Connecting through artifacts and talking are essential dimensions of why Morning Meeting creates access to power, agency, and identity.*

There is value and meaning in sharing artifacts and stories from children's everyday cultures in the classroom. My dual field notes, during the data collection phase and as a regular practice before data collection, were primarily what I wrote down about what children brought in and brief notes about what they talked about. These notes told me what children thought was important to them and wanted us, the class, to know and be a part of that. Since the beginning of the year, children saw me taking notes and I told them early on that I wrote down what they said because I wanted to know what they thought was important and that would help me know them better. If I knew them well, this would help me plan things for the classroom that would connect more with who they are, what they know, and what they wanted to know more about.

To me there is something particular about being able to have the object in front of you and to be able to talk about it with peers, friends, and the teacher. After the data collection phase of dual field notes and reflections, as important as I thought the artifacts and talking were, I felt I needed to theorize the sharing of artifacts and talking about matters of importance to children in greater depth if I was to better understand the role of children's everyday cultures in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting.



*Connecting through artifacts.*

The work of Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell (2010) introduces another theoretical position that recognizes and honours students' out-of-school identities by looking at everyday objects and how these artifacts can generate literacy learning. Pahl and Rowsell use the term *artifactual literacies* to describe, "a critical way of teaching literacy through a connection to lived lives and everyday experiences" (p. 7). Artifactual literacies bring in the everyday world of objects and stories to create meaning. It is a way of looking at literacy education that "lets in" the everyday by acknowledging the material culture that students inhabit out of school. Artifacts never sit alone: they are connected to other artifacts, people, and action. Artifactual literacy should be viewed in context and part of a classroom community. Pahl and Rowsell point out how school "is already a materially situated social practice, but it is often separated in content from home" (p. 11). Artifactual literacies are a way of looking at literacy education that is more than reading, writing, drawing, storytelling, and multimodality: "it is literacy but in a more situated, everyday location" (p. 11). It is a way of working that acknowledges everyday experiences and the material culture that students inhabit out of school.

According to Pahl and Rowsell (2010), teachers need an entry point that recognizes and honours children's out-of-school identities and literacies. The literacy traditionally found in schools is one kind of literacy and literacy in homes includes other types. Barton & Hamilton (1998) describe school as a 'domain of practice', or a world where things happen, and home is another domain. There is a difference between schooled literacy practices and children's everyday literacies of life outside of school. Shirley Brice Heath's ethnographic study of three communities in South Carolina

demonstrates that in some homes, children's "way with words", in particular, oral language, is privileged over other modalities and becomes a powerful resource for meaning making (1983). However, in schools, these skills or "funds of knowledge" are often not used as potential resources for meaning making (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Schooled literacy also often privileges the practices of middle class families more so than working class communities (Heath, 1983). Middle class families will create more experiences with literacies that they know will help children adapt to the rituals and requirements of school compared to the oral language funds of knowledge of many working class families (Heath, 1983).

The everyday practice of children's lives is important. Artifacts are sensory and have colour, shape, and meaning (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 10). When children tell stories of their lives, it creates a sensory experience of a space and place for people to hear. The materiality of literacy such as artifacts, stories, and objects of our daily life, symbolize and represent relationships and events that matter:

These material and symbolic artifacts matter to the meaning-drenched process of composition because they create opportunities for interaction and listening, offer insights about everyday life, and provide an understanding of culture, family, and community. Artifacts are particularly useful to educators because they travel across domains and boundaries and therefore offer insights into the home based, cultural resources of children that often remain hidden; they enable teachers to access communities that may or may not be visible within schools; and they evoke multilingual, multimodal literacies. (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 1)

According to Pahl and Rowsell (2010), artifacts come alive in interaction and in so doing invite sustained meaning making. Artifacts, talk and listening in connected way become a link to children's outside worlds, and are tied up with children's histories, dispositions, their everyday or their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). Artifacts and their stories may also offer researchers different information than other research methods. Artifacts signal dimensions of participant histories that might otherwise be hidden or veiled in observations and interview dialogues (Dicks et al., 2011, 233). Artifacts and talk are tools for learning about children.

Starting from where children are can be a way into where they can go with their literacy learning. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) identify artifacts as "boundary objects" that can cross borders of domains (home/school) and engineer new connections across those borders (p. 16). The crossing is important because it brings the "today-ness of their lives into their meaning making and thereby make connections across the domains of home, community, and school" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 16). Pahl and Rowsell suggest creating inclusive spaces that draw on artifacts to cross over from out-of-school spaces into school so that they can be experienced and learned about in new communities.

*Connecting through listening and talking.*

Literacy learning can be extended and enriched when an object from home is linked with the classroom. Artifacts speak with many voices as one object can tell several stories. Children tell stories from their everyday life, tell other people's stories, and these stories are again told throughout the day as children go about their business at school (Maybin, 2006). Heath's study (1983) reminds us that oral language is privileged in some

homes over other modalities, and Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) advise educators to bring these “funds of knowledge” into literacy. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) believe that when “parents, children, and teachers all tell stories of their favourite artifacts, they enter into a more equal relationship” (p. 42).

Artifactual literacies are not just about objects and artifacts; the process of the talk, interaction, and reactions of those who hear and touch them create greater meaning and learning. Talk plays a role in enriching learning in the classroom, such as creating and sustaining personal knowing in a social place, community building, and enables children to develop new concepts:

Talk is essential in establishing and sustaining communities in which learners — teachers and students alike—can effectively learn and explore, argue and disagree, and support and encourage each other as they work to outgrow their current understandings. (Pierce & Gilles, 1993, pp. ix-x)

The importance of talk lies not in isolated instances but in the meanings and understandings of individuals and groups create over time as people interact or transact with one another. The term *cycles of meaning*, in reference to the role of talk, was coined to explain “the ways learners created meanings as a group over time (Pierce & Gilles, 1993). The telling of stories and artifacts is important but so is the listening and questioning. Paulo Freire (1970) tells us that until learners ask their own questions about things of importance, there will never be any genuine ownership of learning. Ownership has a great deal to do with developing a social consciousness (Watson, 1993).

The interaction of object and talk make the talk and learning in the classroom richer and more extended (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Thompson, 2008). The talk has a different quality. It honours the child's everyday or outside of school practice and becomes woven into school practice. In a dual field note on April 30, 2014, I listed some of Pahl and Rowsell's (2010) affordances of using talk about artifacts that draw on everyday experiences to create learning opportunities that directly relate to Morning Meeting. (p. 42):

- *Listen to children and families in new ways;*
- *Create learning opportunities that respect cultural diversity;*
- *Bring personal experience into the classroom;*
- *Co-construct narratives about artifacts with children;*
- *Help children create new stories and narratives;*
- *Connect these artifact stories to other stories;*
- *Link these stories to more general experiences in the classroom; and*
- *Put children and teachers in a more equitable position*

#### **Dimension 4: Taking Action to Promote Social Justice**

Lewison, Leland and Harste (2008) believe critical literacy is not just about talking about issues facing children, it is also about advocating for equity and justice to make the world a fairer place. In Paulo Freire's (1970) work, he advocates for learners to be agents of change in their lives, and he sees literacy as a means to do this. Freire coined the term *praxis* to explain the importance of "action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 52).

*New understandings of Morning Meeting.*

Notions of action, equity and justice are equally important in Morning Meeting. The critical literacy frameworks of Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) are an essential part of the theoretical foundation of Morning Meeting. However, for me at times, their approach reflects a perspective of action, equity and justice that I do not always connect with. I, like Heffernan, Lewison, Leland, and Harste, believe in helping children be personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. There are many meaningful happenings in our Morning Meeting that have value as capital, knowledge, power, identity, and agency for both children and me. But action and justice look different in my understandings of our Morning Meeting. It may not be the political work of Heffernan but issues of action for equity that are being addressed in our Morning Meeting. For me, Morning Meeting is a time to reveal our selves,, through talk about the artifacts from our lives in and outside of school. Time and space in a safe, trusting environment is a foundation of why Morning Meeting has value as a third space and potential space for transformation. Looking directly at issues of gender, racism, commercialism, materialism, and violence has an important place in our classroom, not just in Morning Meeting but also in other parts of our day (e.g. literacy workshop, inquiries, project work, etc.).

Theoretical models influence educational decisions such as what resources are used, which social practices are enacted, and the stance of the teacher in daily classroom life. Different orientations to working with critical literacy, multiple perspectives and realities of different educators and children, and different understandings of particular

events will help produce different versions of critical social practices in classroom. Sonia Nieto points out that:

language and literacy are inherently political activities and teachers are inherently political agents, whether they see themselves in this way or not. This does not mean that the role of teachers is to brainwash students into believing particular truths. On the contrary, to be a political teacher means you help students uncover multiple realities that they will face in their reading, writing, and living. (Nieto, cited in Janks, 2010, p. x)

In my reflection on May 5, 2014, I wrote about how Morning Meeting, as a third space, involves action and justice that uncovers and exposes a little more of who we are in a safe, trusting place:

*Morning Meeting, through talk, stories, and artifacts, focuses on exploring and realizing who we are, values the class as a community, prioritizes children as knowledgeable, valuable contributors in schooled literacy practices, and creates significant conversations, possibilities, and alternatives. Morning Meeting is more about attention to potential and possibility than problem solving. By creating an environment that allows children to share stories and artifacts of their lives, we create acceptance through recognition that commonality and difference exists between us. We are quietly and humbly gaining a sense of appreciation for one another when we expose our lives, struggles, hopes, and fears. Morning Meeting makes us feel good, helps improve our relationships, increases our openness to new ideas and possibilities for both ourselves and for one another.*

*Morning Meeting is a third space that brings people together around a sense of identity and purpose.*

Just because something is studied, does not mean there is real change. Drawing from multiple perspectives is valuable but it does not guarantee action or change on my part. This is identified as “the precariousness as well as the promise of multiple perspectives” (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008, p. 107). While I am always learning, by deconstructing my theoretical understandings, I am better able to articulate my beliefs about the role of children’s cultures in schooled literacy practices and make theoretical shifts. For example, I see change and action in Morning Meeting more closely connected to the research of *generative change theory*. Generative change theory emphasizes creating small but significant changes in one area (Ball, 2009; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004). These small changes have a ripple effect: change builds upon itself and creates a cycle of activity and evolution for new possibilities to emerge. This self-study is an attempt to surface my personal vision of the role of children’s everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices. This in turn becomes a force for change: change that occurred as part of deconstructing what I thought I knew about language and literacy in order to gain new insights, possibilities and alternatives.

Another generative change for me is that by sharpening my understandings of the theoretical foundations of Morning Meeting, I discovered *critical sociocultural theory*. Sociocultural theory and critical literacy theory borrow and inform each other but also differ from each other. The deconstruction of my understandings of sociocultural theory and critical literacy led me into the research of an expanded form of sociocultural theory called *critical sociocultural theory* and the work of Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2007). This



combinatory theoretical model of sociocultural literacy theory and critical theory allows me to tighten my understandings of how I view language and literacy learning and the importance of including children's everyday cultural experiences in schooled literacy practices:

Critical sociocultural theory demands that we reflexively examine our positioning as researchers and its effect on learning and the production of knowledge.

Viewing research in this way also means that we must understand the role of our own autobiographies, or histories of participation, as well as the histories of our research participants. (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. xi)

Critical sociocultural notions of participation, collaboration and hybridity are evident in Morning Meeting. Children learn to read and write from the social positions they occupy and the types of participation that those roles afford (Gee, 2003; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Street, 2003). What goes on in Morning Meeting depends on who is in the Meeting and the meaning we take away from it. Each individual, as part of a classroom culture, takes something away from it. Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2007) suggest that this type of learning changes the participants in some way:

Learning we argue, both involves experience and requires participation in something. Learning is motivated, as Kress (2003) argued, by a need to understand something, whether an act, or word, a sensory experience. Learning, however, leaves a residue; it makes a mark. (16)

In a theoretical memo in reflection on May 8, I think about the interconnectedness of the learning in Morning Meeting:

*In my eyes, our school beliefs sum up teaching and learning well: Take care of yourself, take care of each other, and take care of this place. Individual learning cannot be separated from the ways the larger context is organized. According to Gutiérrez et al. (1999), “the goal then, is to create rich zones of development in which all participants learn by jointly participating in activities in which they share materials, sociocultural, linguistic, and cognitive resources” (p. 88). For collaboration to serve as a resource for learning in moment-to-moment interaction among students, it must be a central characteristic of the larger activity system: “Collaborating individuals can use their literacy skills, including language, to clarify their own emergent understandings of the task and its goals, share knowledge, assist one another, and shift roles in the learning process. (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 88)*

When collaboration is a commonplace strategy, students begin to see co-learning as the routine way of participating and thinking in everyday learning activities. We take a half hour at the start of everyday and share, explore and play around in people's lives in Morning Meeting. Children are immersed in the valuing of personal stories and artifacts through talk and cooperation in having to reciprocate listening and response. In Morning Meeting, we learn a great deal about each other, such as what is important to people, what we want to share about ourselves, how it connects to others, and how what we learn in Morning Meeting can influence other learning opportunities in our day. We don't always know how what people share and how they share it will affect us. Sometimes it is a conversation starter at recess or before school and other times it might connect to a story that is being written or a book selection for partner reading. For example, on a dual

field note on April 29, 2014, I discussed how people know who likes what and try to find ways to connect around the artifact or story:

*Sam just came back from a few days away. She of course shared her stuffed animal collection. Sampson let her know that when she was away he brought in a similar stuffie he thought she would like and he will bring it again so she could see it.*

This routine, everyday occurrence set the tone for our classroom culture and community. Morning Meeting is more than just words spoken out loud. Talk and artifacts bind us together in opportunities to converse, tell life stories, and engage us in dialogue and possible praxis (Freire, 1970). Moje and Lewis (2007) also point out that participation in the discourse creates potential to change the discourse community:

Learning is thus not only participation in discourse communities, but is also the process by which people become members of discourse communities, resist membership in such communities, are marginalized from discourse communities (or marginalize others), reshape discourse communities, or make new ones. Such membership shapes opportunities to learn, and, ultimately, learning. (p. 20)

Morning Meeting is a small window into children's outside worlds. We see how similar yet different we are because of our experiences, background, families, ethnicity, gender, religion and economic status. Morning Meeting is a mixture of talk and artifacts or a hybrid space that brings together all kinds of children's resources from their everyday cultures. Gutiérrez et al. (1999) define hybridity as "a multi-purposed literacy

activity that utilizes mixed genres (letters, narratives) and mixed discourses (problem solving, narrative and academic discourse)” (p. 89). Morning Meeting also connects to third space research because third spaces are hybrid spaces that bring together all kinds of resources for making sense of the world (Gutiérrez et al., 1999).

Learning is not only about participating and collaborating, they are ways people become members of the class community. Moje & Lewis (2007) suggest that two important conditions of recognition and opportunities of agentic action be part of literacy learning opportunities:

First, it requires that one’s subjectivity and the identities one enacts be recognized and accepted as valid and worthwhile, even when they may conflict with those subjectivities and identities typically built in the learning space. Opportunity to learn also requires that participants have the space and support for agentic action, that is, that learners have opportunities to make and remake themselves, their identities, their discursive toolkits, and their relationships on the basis of new ideas, practices, or discourses learned through their participation in a learning activity.” (p. 20)

Agentic action and transformation within a community, such as ours in Morning Meeting, depends on recognition. In a dual field note on April 22, 2014, I wrote:

*In Morning Meeting, there are times when people share the same thing over and over or grab something they didn’t plan to share that day just to have a chance to share. There is something in the opportunity to be the one to share and to have everyone’s attention on you. It is the chance to speak and be heard in a regular*

*part of the school day. In the process of children sharing their own visions and listening to others, new insights and beliefs also begin to surface in Morning Meeting.*

Our sense of identity and belonging is affected as we find things that interest others or set us apart. Children have opportunities to potentially develop senses of authority, power, and belonging from a short 3-minute share about what they did last night or their latest hockey card. Transformational change in our identities in Morning Meeting may be a combination of having an audience to share what already is significant to us and connects to what other people share. For example, on May 6, 2014, I reflected on the transformational change for Trevor when he had access to sharing parts of his life in Morning Meeting:

*Trevor is a boy who struggles in social situations with his peers and was often quiet in Morning Meetings. Trevor was not a hockey player when the school year started. As the year progressed, he was interested in hockey and found out many things about the sport through discussions in Morning Meeting. He started to bring in hockey cards to share and slowly small hockey conversations started with others before school and during recess. Then he brought in Rainbow Loom bracelets after a group of people shared their creations. Trevor also brought in pictures of his Lego creations after several boys shared their love of Lego.*

Trevor's sharing in Morning Meeting was a opening himself up to different communities. His sharing became a bridge into his development of identity, authority, power, and belonging as others recognized him in Morning Meeting.

*Component 3: Critical stance.*

For Lewison, Leland, and Harste (date), a critical stance is the attitudes and dispositions we take on as critical thinkers and learners. They identify four dimensions of adopting a critical stance:

1. Consciously engaging;
2. Entertaining alternate ways of being;
3. Taking responsibility to inquire; and
4. Being reflexive.

*New understandings of Morning Meeting.*

Engaging in acts of deconstruction and redesign through systematic analysis and writing have become opportunities for generative change and transformation for both the children and me. This self-study is less about my teaching and more about my learning. In Ball's (date) study on developing change within the education system, she found that when teachers see themselves as ongoing learners and connect their personal and professional knowledge with that of their students, they were able create generative change within their classrooms and students (Ball, 2009). In my reflection on April 24, I commented on how my role in Morning Meeting:

*I see myself teaching and learning beside the children in the class during Morning Meeting. This is important to me because I see myself as a teacher, researcher, and learner. Sometimes I was involved in the discussions, other times I was outside the circle as an observer. I prefer the perspective of a shared vision of Morning Meeting and not a "from the top" approach. This takes both courage*

*and risk-taking on the part of the children and my willingness to let go of control. My stance in Morning Meeting is directly connected to my pedagogical stance in other parts of my literacy practice.*

In Morning Meeting I take on different roles at different times. I do not give up total control of Morning Meeting. There are parts of Morning Meeting that I intentionally structured to initiate conversations and show how I wanted all of us to be contributing members in the meeting. Several of my reflections focussed on the emergent redesign of our Morning Meeting as a class. On April 22, I wrote:

*As the year went on, children took greater control of the meeting as they grew in confidence in the classroom culture that we created together. They would direct the agenda and the debriefing after each share, something I did in the beginning. This allowed me to be a participant in the group, take notes, and observe some of what was happening. I often would put my hand up with a “question, comment, or compliment” and not be picked because the person sharing wanted to speak with someone else. This allowed me to understand feelings that others have when they really want to get in on the conversation but are not recognized.*

*Together we developed rules of conversation as the meetings progressed such as:*

- *Only two questions, comments, or compliments to make it a timely share.*
- *If someone interrupted and started to talk to the speaker, if the speaker answered, that would count as one of the responses.*
- *Silent signals were created for the washroom or water so the meeting wouldn't be interrupted.*

- *The last person to share would get another question because they were last.*

Another example of our emergent redesign of Morning Meeting was the use of a timer (April 22 & April 23, 2014). On April 22, 2014 I wrote in my reflection:

*We were noticing that our meeting was taking longer and longer and we wanted to know why. As a class, we decided that we could time each person's share to see how long it actually was. I wanted to be able to use the stopwatch myself so I could look at the time as people shared. I wanted to see what the share looked like at one, two, or three minutes and watch people's body language. But then, Scott asked me to time it. I had a quick internal conversation with myself as he asked me. But then I thought ... if kids can, they should. Scott did a great job of timing unobtrusively and telling me the amount of time taken after they shared. As a class, a few people thought it was competitive and wanted to take the least amount of time. When another student noticed this, they brought it to the class's attention. I said I was hoping the timing would help us to regulate ourselves. I found that some people appreciated knowing how long the sharing was taking. That we might want to know if during the sharing people were staying on topic, so that we are careful with our time and just share important things that are interesting, detailed but brief and powerful in order to keep the interests of the class. We talked about not being long-winded, or rambling, where it is more like the person just wants to talk/hear themselves, without engaging the audience. The class or our class culture is an interesting one. Some people who are confident, are also comfortable for their voices/opinions to be heard. The competitive nature of the timing might have lasted longer as an issue if others dominated the conversation.*



This was one example of the kinds of critique that happens in Morning Meetings on a regular basis. Children have access to authorship, voice, capital, power, and identity construction on a regular basis in Meeting. This example also illuminates the parallel critical conversations about social and identity transformation I see happening as a class, as well as what is happening for me as a teacher-researcher.

In the field of critical sociocultural theory, there is an emphasis on resisting dominant forms and ‘talking back’ or ‘writing back’ to power (Janks, 2010). On the same meeting day as our timing conversation, Annie, brought in a stuffie and was someone who didn’t often share in Morning Meeting (April 22, 2014):

*Annie was upset that the person she said could ask her a question chose to say “do you like oranges?” Another student was concerned for Annie that it was kind of a wasted question for her because it wasn’t relevant to what Annie shared. We only get two questions/comments/compliments so she believed students should put care and thoughtfulness into the nature of the question. I sensed that the person who asked the orange question might now feel embarrassed or upset. I added that it was an interesting dilemma. Sometimes people will put up their hands or ask an unrelated question (but still a question that would get the sharer talking and would be an opportunity to get to know that person better) to help the person sharing know that we care about them and want to hear more about them. So I asked how can we let people know that we want to talk about what we brought and not other topics. Someone suggested that we could say “Questions, comments, compliments about (what I brought today).*

These two examples of children's self-regulating and redesigning after deconstructing our experience show me that Morning Meeting is a practice of critical-sociocultural theory in action. It look different than Heffernan's but there are multiple layers of meaning and value to the children's literacy learning and my own.

Morning Meeting is an opportunity for students to be heard, valued, and recognized for their multiple identities as people in and outside of the classroom. Asking students to bring their own identities and experiences from home into the doors of school, valuing students' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), and using it as a pedagogical resource, mirror processes I wish to be involved in as a professional.

Interrupting dominant viewpoints about official classroom literacy practices and children's unofficial or out-of-school practices parallel questions I have about my own identities as a teacher. Over the past few years, I have been very interested in teacher leadership research and expanding visions of who I am and how I can effect change. I am learning that I can take charge of my own learning and I do not have to be a passive consumer of knowledge from external sources. The self-study is a kind of responsibility-taking act where, I, as the learner, take ownership of my continuing professional learning, in a similar fashion to how I see children learning under my care in the classroom.

I feel as if, as a teacher, some of my identities run counter to what is valued, privileged, and acknowledged in the professional community in which I work. Valuing variety and diversity of thought about schooled literacy practices, a quest for legitimacy of the role of popular culture in schooled literacy practices, and learning how to negotiate in literacy education when those in power positions may be privileging certain ways of

thinking over others, pushes me to articulate the significance of the Morning Meeting in a scholarly way.

## CHAPTER 5: AFTERWORD

This self-study examines the role that children's out-of school lives play in the schooled literacy practices of the *Morning Meeting*. It is a systematic attempt to make the invisible, visible, or the insignificant, significant. The purpose of this master's thesis research study has been to look at my understandings of my teaching practice in order to learn from it. It is a self-study: I studied issues of children's out of school lives and how they connect to literacy teaching and learning in school. I systematically analyzed my dual field notes and journal reflections of the events of our daily Morning Meeting. I took written notes of who participated, what the conversation was about, and considered the potential value of having opportunities for children's out-of-school everyday cultures connect to a schooled literacy practice such as Morning Meeting (that has been a significant part of my practice over the last few years). The study of my understandings of the value of Morning Meeting is a potential new way of looking at literacy education.

Morning Meetings is a daily ritual where we share artifacts or talk about what is going on in our lives, in and outside of school. Morning Meeting is one of the places in my practice where I face challenging professional understandings of what counts as literacy, what "schooled" literacy practices are, what literacy practices belong in school, what gets left out, who makes these decisions for the students in my classroom, and whose voices are privileged or marginalized in these discussions.

In one of my final reflections (May 5, 2014), I thought about how in this self-study, I was taking time to reflect on seemingly small, insignificant everyday moments:

*This self-study is a systematic attempt to make the invisible, visible or the insignificant, significant. One of my favourite books is “Making School By Hand” by Mary Kenner Glover (1997). Glover spent time attending thoughtfully to the process of “a teacher and her children developing their own way, working by hand” (Glover, 1997, p. xi).*

*Glover helped me persist to find the greater issues underlying Morning Meeting with children, our hands together:*

*If we are to begin viewing school as a handmade process, we have to give our students daily opportunities to use their hands to help them construct an understanding of what they come upon in the world. We need to trust that, in giving them time to express what they know and to explore ideas they wonder about, they will lead us to new ways of thinking about our work as teachers. In doing so together, we can make a project of our school life. (1997, p. xx)*

*I went back to this sentimental favourite because Glover used the materials and stories of everyday life to create a curriculum to meet the needs and interests of students; much the same as I am trying to do in Morning Meeting. It reminds me of the importance of personal reflection, and in my case, the importance of doing this self-study.*

On the surface, Morning Meeting may appear insignificant, but in deconstructing this final part of our day, I have made the invisible more visible and the insignificant more significant. I have pushed the “edges of my understanding” in hopes of finding out

“the truths of my heart” (Glover, 1997, p. xiv). This self-study thesis has taken me a long time to complete. I have had to stay strong and committed, during the most difficult times of my life. This has come with a cost. However, what it affords or gives me outweighs what has been taken away. I have deconstructed, redesigned, and transformed my thinking and practice of the role of children’s everyday cultures in schooled literacy practices in multiple ways. Theory and practice go hand-in-hand. They are entangled in many ways. I exit this study with a renewed understanding of how children’s everyday cultures play a significant role in the schooled literacy practice of Morning Meeting. My new goal is for this transformation to ignite a process of self-perpetuating regeneration of thinking and action for me as a teacher-researcher and for the children with whom I have the privilege to learn every day.

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## Appendix A



Faculty of Education

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262 Education Building  
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Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9014  
Fax (204) 474-7550

Cora Campbell

Dear Families of Room \*,

I am writing to you to share some information about research I am pursuing. I am systematically investigating Morning Meeting for my master's thesis. This letter is requesting your child's participation in one part of my research.

**Study Title:** The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices: A Self- Study

**Principal Investigator:** Cora Campbell, master's Thesis Candidate

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Wayne Serebrin, University of Manitoba,  
Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca , (204) 474-9024

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

**Project Description:**

I am systematically investigating what I learn as a teacher about literacy during Morning Meetings. I will be looking at a 3-week period of Morning Meetings. I regularly take notes during Morning Meeting to help me get to know the children and find ways to connect who they are to the literacy experiences at school. I will be looking at patterns and themes that arise during the Morning Meetings to help me understand the importance of having time for children to talk about different aspects of their lives when they come to school and how these discussions inform my planning and thinking about literacy education at school.

**Participants Requirements:**

This thesis focuses on what I am learning as a teacher during Morning Meetings and obviously involves the children. I am asking your permission for me to study research notes that I have made during our Morning Meetings (that include your child), and which inform my thinking and planning about teaching literacy in our classroom. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of research. Therefore, I am requesting your consent and your child's assent to use my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting for my master's thesis research about the role children's outside of school lives could make in their literacy learning in school.

I am seeking permission from families in my classroom to be able to include data collected during Morning Meeting over a 3-week period from the week of April 21 to the week of May 5, 2014. Only data from the 3-week period will be used. I will be systematically analyzing patterns and themes arising from these research notes to help me understand the importance of having time for children to talk about different aspects of their lives in school and how such understandings inform what I know and do in teaching literacy.

Only my research supervisor at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, the University of Manitoba Ethics office, and I will have access to the data. Children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications. All documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home until the completion of my thesis. At this time I anticipate completing my thesis by August 2014. All data will be destroyed one year after completion of my final thesis.

Your permission to use data collected that includes your child must be given voluntarily. I want to assure you that there are no consequences that will arise from giving or withholding your permission. To ease any pressure you might feel because I was your child's teacher, I am asking that returned consent forms be sent to the school office, addressed to school secretary, not to me. Our school secretary will store the consent letters in a sealed envelope in a locked cabinet in the office. After June 27, 2014 I will open the envelope and then compile only the documentation for the students I have received consent. If you decide to withdraw your consent, or your child decides to withdraw his/her consent, you are free to do so at any time by contacting me (\*) or our school secretaries (\*). If permission is not given or is withdrawn, no documentation regarding your child will be used or referred to in my written thesis or subsequent presentations or publications. I am held to the same standards in this study as all teachers are in Manitoba. If a student discloses information about potential child abuse I will follow procedures outlined by the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act.

I have informed the school principal, \*, and the \*School Division Assistant Superintendent, \*, of my intended research, which they have granted me permission to

complete. Should you feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, you are free to contact, \* (\*), Dr. Wayne Serebrin, my research supervisor, (204-474-9024), or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122.

The content of the written thesis may be shared in later presentations and publications. The thesis and later presentations and publications will not contain anything beyond what I was given permission to share in the written thesis. If you decide to give consent/assent for me to use my notes and reflections pertaining to your child for the purposes of my study and if you indicate that you wish to have a copy of the summary of the study that shows how this data was used to inform my teaching I will provide this to you. A copy of my completed thesis will be left at the school and the secretary and Parent Council will be informed when it is available to be viewed by interested parties.

Please talk with your child and determine whether he or she agrees to give permission. I have attached a few notes to help you speak with your child. Please return one copy of the signed consent/assent form in the attached envelope directly to the school secretaries at the office by April 16, 2014 and keep the other for your records.

I will be available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have. I may be reached at school (\*), at home (\*), or via email at (\*). The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

The Education/Nursing Ethics Review Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Sincerely,

Cora Campbell

**Informed Consent Form (Parent/Guardians)**

**Study Title:** The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices:  
A Self- Study

**Principal Investigator:** Cora Campbell, Master's Thesis Candidate

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Wayne Serebrin, University of Manitoba,  
Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca , (204) 474-9024

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)**. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. Sign both copies and keep on for your record and reference and send the other signed copy in the envelope back to our school secretary by April 16, 2014.

---

I give consent to Cora Campbell to revisit examples of documentation referring to my child for the purpose of her research investigation, which may include:

- Notes and reflections about Morning Meeting that have been written by Cora to reflect on for her master's thesis research.

I give consent for Cora Campbell to refer to her documentation notes and reflections of Morning Meeting that includes my child that will be reported in her master's thesis in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Manitoba. I understand that children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications.

\_\_\_\_\_

(Name of Participant's Parent/Guardian)                      (Signature)                      (Date)

Check the box below if you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study.

Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the results.                      ( )

No, thanks.                      ( )

If you check yes above, please let me know how you would prefer to receive the summary of results:

Email ( )                      Canada Post ( )

Sent home with my child ( )

If you have indicated email or Canada Post, please include the necessary information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_



### Student Assent Form

**Please talk about this with your child and if they assent, have *her/him sign the form by printing their name on the line.***

- I have asked my child, \_\_\_\_\_ who has indicated assent for Cora Campbell to refer to her documentation notes and reflections of Morning Meeting that includes my child that will be reported in her master's thesis in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Manitoba. My child understand that children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student print name here)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Researcher's Signature)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Date)**

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7173, or email [Margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and references.

## Appendix B

## Information Session Invitation

Dear Families of Room \*,

I am currently working on my Master's of Education degree at the University of Manitoba. I am now preparing to begin my research for my thesis. The title of my thesis is: the Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices: A Self-Study.

This research is primarily a systematic investigation of what I am learning as a teacher about and Morning Meeting involves the children. I am asking your permission for me to look at notes and written reflections of Morning Meeting that include your child to help me learn more about teaching reading and writing. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of research. Therefore, I am requesting your consent and your child's assent to use my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting for my master's thesis to help me learn more about why what is important to children outside of school might make a difference to reading and writing in school.

I am attaching several sheets that are intended to provide information regarding my study. I have included consent forms that I am hoping you will read over, sign, and return to the school office in the envelope provided. If you have questions, please call me at school (\*), email me (\*) or join me for a brief evening information session in which I can answer questions and provide further information.

Information session will be held

Thursday, April 10, 2014

5:00 to 5:30pm

\* School Library

Thank you for your interest and consideration,

Cora Campbell

## Appendix C



Faculty of Education

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Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9014  
Fax (204) 474-7550

Cora Campbell

Principal, \*School  
\* School Division  
Address

Dear \*,

I am writing to you to share some information about the teacher-research I am pursuing. I am systematically collecting data for my master's thesis that explores my understandings about how our Morning Meeting creates a space to analyze what kind of role children's out of school lives play in school literacy. This letter is requesting your permission for my research to take place at School. I am also informing and requesting permission from, Assistant Superintendent, \*School Division.

**Study Title:** The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices: A Self Study

**Principal Investigator:** Cora Campbell, Master's Thesis Candidate

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Wayne Serebrin, University of Manitoba,  
[Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca), (204) 474-9024

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any

accompanying information.

**Project Description:**

The purpose of the research study is to systematically investigate my understandings of my teaching practice in order to learn from it. This is a self-study: I am studying my thinking processes related to issues of children's out of school lives and how they connect to literacy teaching and learning in school. I want to do this by revisiting my notes and reflections on the events of our daily Morning Meeting. Morning Meetings have become a daily ritual in our day where we share things or talk about what's going on in our lives outside of school. Morning Meeting has become a space in my practice where I am facing challenging professional understandings of what it means to educate, what counts as literacy, what are "schooled" literacy practices, what literacy practices belong in school, what gets left out, who makes these decisions for the students in my classroom, and whose voices are being privileged in these discussions.

**Participants Requirements:**

The children in my classroom are part of the context of Morning Meeting but not the subject of this proposed research into my own professional practice. However, of course, the best interests of the children in my classroom are my primary consideration. Although families will have an opportunity to sign a divisional consent form to use, display, or share documentation of students' learning outside the classroom for educational purposes at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, this letter is not a consent form to participate in my self-study Master's thesis.

I will be seeking permission of the families in my classroom for the 2013-2014 school year to use the documentation for a new purpose. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of research. Therefore, I am requesting the consent of families in my classroom and their child's assent to use my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting for my Master's thesis to help me reflect on my teaching practice.

I am seeking permission from families in my classroom to be able to include data collected during Morning Meeting over a 3-week period from the week of April 21 to the

week of May 5, 2014. There is no request in this study proposal for using previously collected data before ENREB approval of the proposed study. Only my research supervisor at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, the University of Manitoba Ethics office, and I will have access to the data. Children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications. All documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home until the completion of my thesis. At this time I anticipate completing my thesis by August 2014. All data will be destroyed one year after completion of my final thesis.

The permission to use data collected that includes children in my classroom must be given voluntarily. I want to assure families that there are no consequences that will arise from giving or withholding his or her permission. To ease any pressure students or families might feel because I am the student's teacher, I am asking that returned consent forms be sent to the school office, addressed to school secretary, not to me. Our school secretaries will store the consent letters in a sealed envelope in a locked cabinet in the office. They will not reveal the names to me until June 27, 2014. After this date I will open the envelope and then compile only the documentation for the students I have received consent. If permission is not given or is withdrawn, no documentation regarding the student will be used or referred to in my written thesis or subsequent presentations or publications. I am held to the same standards in this study as all teachers are in Manitoba. If a student discloses information about potential child abuse I will follow procedures outlined by the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act. Should families feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, families are free to contact, \* principal, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, my research supervisor, (474-9024), or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122.

This research may benefit my own professional practice and contribute to an educational dialogue about the role of popular culture in school literacy. The content of the written thesis may be shared in later presentations and publications. The thesis and later presentations and publications will not contain anything beyond what I was given permission to share in the written thesis. A copy of my completed thesis will be left at the

school and the secretaries and Parent Council will be informed when it is available to be viewed by interested parties.

I will be available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at school (204-\*), at home (\*), or via email \*. In addition to contacting my research advisor, Dr. Wayne Serebrin (204-474-9024), or me you may verify the ethics approval for this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the University of Manitoba Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

Your signature below indicates that you give permission for the described research to take place at \* School in \* School Division. Please return one copy of the signed consent form in the attached envelope directly to me at \* School and keep the other for your records.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cora Campbell

I give my consent for Cora Campbell to conduct her self-study in the 2013-2014 school year from the week of April 21 to the week of May 5, 2014 at \* School in \* School Division for her Master's thesis for the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.

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Signature of Principal

---

Date

## Appendix D



Faculty of Education

Department of Curriculum,  
Teaching and Learning  
262 Education Building  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9014  
Fax (204) 474-7550

Cora Campbell

Name  
Assistant Superintendent, \* School Division  
Address

Dear \*,

I am writing to you to share some information about the teacher-research I am pursuing. I am collecting data for my master's thesis that explores my understandings about how our Morning Meeting creates a space to analyze what kind of role children's out of school lives play in school literacy. This letter is requesting your permission for my research to take place in this division. I am also informing and requesting permission from\*, the principal of \* School for my research to take place at \* School.

**Study Title:** The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices: A Self- Study

**Principal Investigator:** Cora Campbell, Master's Thesis Candidate

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Wayne Serebrin, University of Manitoba,  
Wayne.Serebrin@umanitoba.ca, (204) 474-9024

This consent form, a copy of which I will leave with you for your records, should give you the basic idea of what the research is about. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or on information not included here, you should feel free to ask.

**Project Description:**

The purpose of the research study is to systematically investigate my understandings of my teaching practice in order to learn from it. This is a self-study: I



am studying my thinking processes related to issues of children's out of school lives and how they connect to literacy teaching and learning in school. I want to do this by revisiting my notes and reflections on the events of our daily Morning Meeting. Morning Meetings have become a daily ritual in our day where we share things or talk about what's going on in our lives outside of school. Morning Meeting has become a space in my practice where I am facing challenging professional understandings of what it means to educate, what counts as literacy, what are "schooled" literacy practices, what literacy practices belong in school, what gets left out, who makes these decisions for the students in my classroom, and whose voices are being privileged in these discussions.

### **Participants Requirements:**

The children in my classroom are part of the context of Morning Meeting but not the subject of this proposed research into my own professional practice. However, of course, the best interests of the children in my classroom are my primary consideration. Although families will have an opportunity to sign a divisional consent form to use, display, or share documentation of students' learning outside the classroom for educational purposes at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, this letter is not a consent form to participate in my self-study Master's thesis.

I will be seeking permission of the families in my classroom for the 2013-2014 school year to use the documentation for a new purpose. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of research. Therefore, I am requesting the consent of families in my classroom and their child's assent to use my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting for my Master's thesis to help me reflect on my teaching practice.

I am seeking permission from families in my classroom to be able to include data collected during Morning Meeting over a 3-week period during the 2013-2014 school year from the week of April 21 to the week of May 5, 2014. There is no request in this study proposal for using previously collected data before ENREB approval of the proposed study. Only my research supervisor at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, the University of Manitoba Ethics office, and I will have access to the data.

Children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications. All documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home until the completion of my thesis. At this time I anticipate completing my thesis by August 2014. All data will be destroyed one year after completion of my final thesis.

The permission to use data collected that includes children in my classroom must be given voluntarily. I want to assure families that there are no consequences that will arise from giving or withholding his or her permission. To ease any pressure students or families might feel because I am the student's teacher, I am asking that returned consent forms be sent to the school office, addressed to school secretaries, not to me. They will store the consent letters in a sealed envelope in a locked cabinet in the office. They will not reveal the names to me until June 27, 2014. After this date I will open the envelope and then compile only the documentation for the students I have received consent. If permission is not given or is withdrawn, no documentation regarding the student will be used or referred to in my written thesis or subsequent presentations or publications. I am held to the same standards in this study as all teachers are in Manitoba. If a student discloses information about potential child abuse I will follow procedures outlined by the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act.

Should families feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, families are free to contact, principal (\*), Dr. Wayne Serebrin, my research supervisor, (474-9024), or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122.

This research may benefit my own professional practice and contribute to an educational dialogue about the role of popular culture in school literacy. The content of the written thesis may be shared in later presentations and publications. The thesis and later presentations and publications will not contain anything beyond what I was given permission to share in the written thesis. A copy of my completed thesis will be left at the school and the secretaries and Parent Council will be informed when it is available to be viewed by interested parties.

I will be available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at school (\*), at home (\*), or via email \*. In addition to contacting my research advisor, Dr. Wayne Serebrin (204-474-9024), or me, you may verify the ethics approval for this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the University of Manitoba Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

Your signature below indicates that you give permission for the described research to take place in \* School Division. Please return one copy of the signed consent form in the attached envelope directly to me at \* School and keep the other for your records.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cora Campbell

I give my consent for Cora Campbell to conduct her self-study in the 2013-2014 school year from the week of April 21 to the week of May 5, 2014 at \* School in \* School Division for her Master's thesis for the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba

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Signature of Assistant Superintendent

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Date

## Appendix E

**Possible Script for Parents of Room 2 Participants**

- Mrs. Campbell is researching Morning Meeting for her university studies.
- Mrs. Campbell is asking your permission to look at her notes of Morning Meeting to help her learn more about teaching reading and writing.
- Your real name and you will not be in her final paper or if she does any presentations or writes articles about this study.
- This research is about what Mrs. Campbell is learning about finding ways to connect what is important to you outside of school and in school, how Morning Meeting helps her to understand you and reading/writing more and how that might change how she teaches children.
- Even though the study is about what Mrs. Campbell is learning, she needs your permission because you are in Morning Meeting.
- You can say yes or no, either is fine. You will not be 'in trouble' if you say you don't want her to use the notes that include you. You are going to give your answer on a form to the school secretaries, in the office.
- If you give Mrs. Campbell permission to use her notes so she can study them, and you change your mind later, that's okay too. A call can be made to the school secretary and she will take your name off the list.
- If this sounds okay and you want to give Mrs. Campbell permission to use her notes for her study of Morning Meeting that include you, please sign the form by printing your name by your parent's or guardian's name on the line on the form. Sign both copies, keep one at home and send one back to school as soon as you can.

## Appendix F

## Script for Information Session

I am researching what I learn as a teacher about literacy during Morning Meetings. I will be systematically analyzing a 3-week period of Morning Meetings. I will only be using notes and reflections from these 3 weeks and no other time. I have always taken notes during Morning Meeting to help me get to know the children and find ways to connect who they are to reading and writing during school. I will be looking at patterns and themes to help me understand the importance of having time for children to talk about different parts of their lives in school and how that impacts what I know about reading and writing and how I teach reading and writing.

Morning Meeting involves the children. I am asking your permission for me to look at notes of Morning Meeting that include your child to help me learn more about teaching reading and writing. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of research. Therefore, I am requesting your consent and your child's assent to use my notes and reflections of Morning Meeting for my Master's Thesis to help me learn more about why what is important to children outside of school might make a difference to reading and writing in school.

I am seeking permission from families in my classroom to be able to include data collected during Morning Meeting over a 3-week period from the week of April 21 to the week of May 5, 2014. Only data from the 3-week period will be used. I will be looking at patterns and themes to help me understand the importance of having time for children to talk about different parts of their live in school and how that impacts what I know about reading and writing.

Only my research supervisor at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Wayne Serebrin, the University of Manitoba Ethics office, and I will have access to the data. Children's names and verbatim comments will not appear in the final thesis, presentations or publications. All documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home until the completion of my thesis. At this time I anticipate completing my thesis by August 2014. All data will be destroyed one year after completion of my final thesis.

So here is a summary:

- I am doing a research study of Morning Meetings for my university course.

- I am asking your permission to systematically investigate my notes and reflections on Morning Meeting to help me learn more about teaching reading and writing.
- Your child and his or her name will not be in my final paper or if I do any presentations or write articles about this study.
- This research is about what I am learning about finding ways to connect what is important to children outside of school and in school, how Morning Meeting helps me to understand my students and reading/writing more and how that might change how I teach children.
- Even though the study is about what I am learning, I need your permission because children are in Morning Meeting.
- You can say yes or no, either is fine. Your child will not be 'in trouble' if you say you don't want me to use the notes that include your child. You and your child are going to give your answer on a form to the secretaries in the office.
- If you give me permission to use my notes so I can study them, and you change your mind later, that's okay too. A call can be made to the school secretary and she will take your name off the list.

If this sounds okay and you want to give me permission to use my notes/reflections for my study of Morning Meeting that include your child, please sign the form by printing your name by the parent's or guardian's name and your child has to print their name on the line on the form. Sign both copies, keep one at home and send one back to school as soon as you can.

## Appendix G



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Research Ethics and Compliance  
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics  
208-194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Phone +204-474-7122  
Fax +204-269-7173

## APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

January 27, 2014

TO: Cora Campbell (Advisor W. Serebrin)  
Principal Investigator

FROM: Loma Guse, Chair  
Education/Nursing Research Ethics

Re: Protocol #E2013:061  
"The Role of Children's Everyday Cultures in Schooled Literacy Practices"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax. (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: <http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0>)

if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human\\_ethics\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.