THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS AN OTHER SPACE:
A CASE STUDY INQUIRY INTO LITERACY AND IDENTITY

by

Alyson Thompson Rumberger

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Maria Paula Ghiso, Sponsor
Professor Marjorie Siegel

Approved by the Committee on the Degree of Doctor of Education

Date ______ 16 May 2018 _______

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Teachers College, Columbia University

2018
THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS AN OTHER SPACE:
A CASE STUDY INQUIRY INTO LITERACY AND IDENTITY

Alyson Thompson Rumberger

This study builds on research conducted in classrooms by proposing that literacy happens in a range of school spaces that educational research has traditionally left unattended, such as lunchrooms, hallways, and libraries. Libraries are one space, of many, in schools where literacy “happens,” despite the paucity of information about this complex space. This study explored the library as situated within a disagreement about how libraries should be utilized—either as democratic sites that provide access to a range of texts, or as sites of direct instruction in standards-aligned informational literacy.

Informed by a spatial framework, this study investigated one school library to trace which literacy practices circulated in the space through observations, spatial maps, semi-structured interviews, and artifact analysis. Findings included the library functioning as a liminal space, where competing ideas about literacy circulated. Focal students demonstrated dominant notions of what “counted” as literacy, in that they engaged in discourses that were privileged within established conceptions of schooling.
However, there were also pockets of playfulness, where the space began to “crack” and gave way to a construction that was fluid, interrupting expected literacy practices.

In a context where classrooms continue to become constrained, alongside reduced funding for library programs, the diversity of literacy experiences that students can encounter decreases. Discovering what is possible in *one* space can offer fruitful discussion around the potential of school libraries, and other spaces for literacy, to strengthen literacy experiences in schools for our students who are most implicated by narrow definitions of literacy.
DEDICATION

For Amanda, Deborah, and the first-grade students at City Partnership School, who I was so fortunate to learn from.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of my personal and professional relationships with many amazing scholars, mentors, colleagues, and friends and family members. First and foremost, this project would not have been possible without the interest and commitment of the teachers, administrators, and students at City Partnership School. Since my early days at City Partnership School, I felt welcomed into the community. To the librarian, who I refer to as Amanda, you not only became a colleague and collaborator with me in this project, but a very dear friend. Thank you for opening up your classroom, library, and heart to me over the past several years. To Deborah, you graciously agreed to let me research in your library space, and I am so indebted to your openness to, and support of, my work. To my focal students—Mark, Nikki, Carla, and James—thank you for letting me follow you, read with you, and get to know you while you spent time in the library. I have learned more from you than you will ever know!

I have been extremely privileged to learn from my dissertation sponsor, advisor, and mentor, Dr. María Paula Ghiso. From the beginning, you helped me to see that there was something interesting happening in the library and encouraged me to pursue my inquiries with your guidance. I am grateful for your compassion and support of this study, while continuing to offer feedback that strengthened my own thinking around language and literacy. A second mentor, Dr. Marjorie Siegel, has also been involved in this dissertation from the very beginning. You have pushed my theoretical thinking deeply and helped me to unpack what I was learning into a coherent argument with each new revision of the document. Throughout my years at Teachers College, you have been a constant support of my work as an emerging scholar, and I have learned so much from
you. I would also like to thank Dr. Haeny Yoon, my third committee member, for teaching me ways to approach my data, and encouraging me to look more deeply at the notions of children’s play. Since my proposal defense, you have been a constant supporter and mentor of this work.

My experiences at Teachers College, and in this dissertation process, would not have been the same without my friends and colleagues. To Amy Tondreau, Makila Meyers, Laurie Rabinowitz, and Daniel Ferguson—also known as my “critical literacy posse”—you have each shaped my work, and shaped me, in so many ways. You have become trusted colleagues and dear friends. I look forward to our continued discussions together, annual meet-ups, and following each of your careers.

I would not have gotten to this stage of my life and career without my incredibly supportive family. My parents, Emilie and Jeff Hard, you taught me from a very early age that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to. I attribute my passion for education, research, and my work ethic to the both of you. To my brother, Andrew Hard, I admire your creative writing gene, and have always appreciated your thoughts and feedback on my own work. To TJ Rumberger, you are embedded in every step of this dissertation. I would not have come to New York, or to Teachers College, without you and no words will ever be enough to thank you for that. Finally, to my aunt and uncle, Julie and Keith Thomson, you have been a source of constant and unwavering encouragement for me throughout my life. Your support of this project, and this degree, mean the world to me.

A.T.R.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................................................................................................................... xi

Chapter I—INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ........................................................................... 1
  Background of the Study ........................................................................................................ 2
  Background on School Libraries and Librarians .......................................................... 3
  Research on School Libraries and Librarians .......................................................... 6
  Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................... 7
  Statement of Purpose and Research Questions .................................................... 10
  Overview of the Study .................................................................................................... 12
  Rationale for the Study .................................................................................................. 13
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................... 14
    The Complexity of Space .......................................................................................... 15
    What is Space? Space vs. Place ........................................................................... 17
    Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace .......................................................... 19
    Multiple Conceptions of Thirdspace ................................................................. 22
    A Social Justice Perspective on Space ........................................................... 25
  Significance of the Study ............................................................................................... 27

Chapter II—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ....................................................................... 30
  Perspectives on Literacy ............................................................................................... 31
    Schooled Literacies .............................................................................................. 32
    Literacies as Socially Situated .............................................................................. 35
  Other Spaces for Literacy in Schools ...................................................................... 37
    Student Agency in Other Spaces ........................................................................ 38
    Literacy Coaches Working in Other Spaces .......................................................... 42
  Contextualizing Libraries and Librarianship ........................................................... 46
    Historical Context of Libraries ........................................................................... 47
    The Positioning of Librarians ............................................................................... 50
  The Identities of School Librarians ....................................................................... 55
    Identity Construction in the Library ..................................................................... 56
    School Librarians as Collaborators ...................................................................... 61
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 65

Chapter III—METHODOLOGY .............................................................................................. 67
  Research Questions ...................................................................................................... 70
  Overview of Research Design ................................................................................... 70
  Research Site ............................................................................................................... 72
    Contextualizing the School .................................................................................... 73
    Contextualizing the Library .................................................................................... 75
  Participants ................................................................................................................... 76
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Image of the “donated books” shelf</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carla’s writing, displayed in the hallway</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student work displayed in the library</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Picture of the empty library</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Map of the browsing area</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mark’s map (1/12/2017)</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Read-aloud map (12/9/2016)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spatial map of Mark browsing (1/10/2017)</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Picture from Mark’s reading response (11/9/2016)</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spatial map of Mark and Nikki’s browsing (1/25/2017)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Picture of the library from Nikki’s interview (1/25/2017)</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>James’ drawing of the library (12/15/2016)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mark’s drawing of the library (11/10/2016)</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Map from the first browsing period (9/22/2016)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Carla’s picture of the spiny shelf (10/27/2016)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Carla’s picture of the Mo Willems book (10/27/2016)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>James’ picture of Knuffle Bunny Too (11/3/2016)</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>James’ picture of the joke books (11/3/2016)</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Spatial map from Carla’s browsing (12/6/2016)</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Spatial map of Nikki in the comfy chair (12/13/2016)</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Spatial map of Mo Willems play fighting (11/10/2016)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>James’ picture of the library (12/15/2016)</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Spatial map of Mark’s mobile reading practices (2/8/2017)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“But what was most important was that I felt no boundaries in that library—there was room for me in its expanse. There were no shelves I could not claim, no books beyond my reach” (Holloway, 2006, p. 118)

Even as a young child, I identified as a reader, so much that I can’t articulate an identity that is separate from my love of reading. I don’t recall a time that I didn’t have a book in my hand. As I grew into an adolescent, summers were spent pouring over my collection of young adult series—*The Babysitters Club* (Martin, 1986-2000) in particular. Even as I began to outgrow these titles, I often dug them out of boxes in my closet and would spend an hour or two revisiting old favorites. My identity was a readerly identity. I read about girls like me, who had experiences like me, who spoke in ways that were similar to me. I, too, spoke in ways that were reflected in these beloved texts. What I had not yet come to understand was that my identity as a reader was privileged in many ways—that I never had to search far for characters whose lives mirrored my own. A student with privilege, my identity was validated through the texts that I selected (often during visits to the library), and I could assert “command of space” (Zacher, 2009) even as a child during these visits. Despite being a self-proclaimed bookworm, however, as a teenager I curated a social identity (Zacher, 2009) based around what I deemed to be desirable interests and qualities for a female high school student. Therefore, as I entered high school, I reserved my outside-of-school reading for my home space rather than frequenting the school library, a deliberate choice that I made in shaping the way that I was perceived socially. Thus, my identity has always shaped, and been shaped by, the language that I use, the texts I read, and the spaces that I choose to traverse in my daily
life. This matters for my work, as “every person has a biography that precedes her existence as a researcher” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 57). My biography as a reader cannot be divorced from my presence in doing research.

The library was a sanctuary for me as a young child; it was a physical place, but was also a space with a distinct ethos, culture, and history. I felt welcome in the library and knew how to navigate it. However, it was my younger brother who truly transformed in the library of our elementary school. A highly proficient reader who loved books, particularly graphic novels, and yet often disengaged from the traditional school structure, my brother thrived in the library. He wasn’t given predetermined books, specified pages to read, or questions to answer. The libraries of our childhood were largely unregulated spaces where he could interact with texts on his own terms. This is not the same in across all communities, many of which are more implicated by assessment pressures.

When I became a teacher, I looked forward to bringing my students to the school library and picking them up with books in hand. The students interacted with the library space in different ways, some more excited about those weekly visits than others. Often, I noticed that the students who struggled the most with literacy in the traditional classroom expressed the most interest in visiting, asking if they could visit during recess. Many of them would meander back to our classroom, already captivated by what they were reading, often unknowingly falling out of line. I loved seeing the readers that struggled to master the literacies privileged in schools (and often in our classroom) entranced by a book—a book that they chose, not that was chosen for them. However, some students still resisted the library, finding that while they could select books of their choice, our school
library didn’t house the multimedia texts and games that captivated their attention. Although they had more flexibility in selecting books in the library, they were still limited to traditional notions of what literacy looked like.

Despite the narrow focus on books, our librarian didn’t expect students to select books at their level, and they weren’t asked to complete comprehension exercises. Of course, this is not the case in every school library, where some have more rigid structures than others, becoming extensions of the classroom instead of an alternatively designed space. I was grateful that our school librarian envisioned the space as one for student exploration with texts, rather than a space for additional direct instruction, and that she had the flexibility to do so. A lover of children’s literature, our school librarian was a librarian with flair. To the delight of the students, she would often dress in theme, wearing a patchwork sweater and elephant earrings, for example, to match the children’s book *Elmer* (McKee, 1989). Despite her expertise and enthusiasm, the only times that my colleagues and I truly interacted with her were in these brief pick-up or drop-off times. Although I didn’t always plan for my dissertation work to take place in an elementary school library, as I reflect on my own life as a reader, it actually comes as no surprise. It is the keeper of texts that have shaped my identity, and shaped the identities of many of my former students. Walking into a library, for me, feels like coming home.
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

There is plentiful research around literacies in classroom spaces (Dyson, 2003; Dutro, 2010), outside of school spaces (Bloome & Enciso, 2006), and the connections or disconnections therein (Heath, 1982). However, the dichotomy of literacy as inside/outside of school is problematic, as students do not solely engage in literacies while in the classroom and at home—literacy happens throughout a student’s day as they traverse many spaces, even within the school building. This study seeks to build on research conducted in classrooms and communities by proposing that literacy happens in a wide range of school spaces that educational research has traditionally not attended to, such as common areas, lunchrooms, hallways, and school libraries. Throughout this dissertation, I investigated the school library as a site of fruitful literacy research. The existing literature around libraries most often explores the isolated tasks and activities that students engage with in school libraries and doesn’t necessarily examine the diverse literacy practices that underlie those experiences. In fact, ethnographers of education have typically paid little attention to school libraries as a site for literacy research (Dressman, 1997).

Libraries are one space, of many, in schools where literacy “happens.” In a time of increasing standardization and a culture of accountability (Olivant, 2015), the library merits consideration as an “other space” (Foucault, 1986) for literacy. Foucault (1986) defined these “other spaces” as distinctly different, and yet in relation to, more structured
spaces, mentioning libraries as one example. As an other space with more institutional fluidity, I argue that the library might offer unique possibilities for literacy. Scholars (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006; Janks, 2009) have argued that, too often, language and literacy act as mechanisms of sorting and selecting students, becoming gatekeepers for who might be considered literate or not. This is perhaps made most clear in classrooms. However, in other spaces such as libraries, such sorting and selecting may or may not be present, as the library is designed to be open to everyone. On the other hand, libraries are not outside of school structures and can also be spaces of rules, order, and organization. In his essay, Foucault (1986) argued that even within a real place are often multiple, competing spaces, impossible to be characterized monolithically. For example, school libraries are often repurposed for meetings, activities, or because the librarian is needed to cover a classroom, which positions the library as multipurpose, and not necessarily a space reserved for literacy practices, despite its original intent. This common practice, in turn, has great implications for the identity of the school librarian. To better understand the complexity of literacy education and the many spaces in which it takes place, I argued for the need to examine and document these other spaces in efforts to move beyond conflating “in-school” with merely “in-classroom,” conceptualizing the school institution as a collection of multiple spaces.

**Background of the Study**

This dissertation study was situated in an elementary school library in a major urban center in the Northeast of the United States. Libraries have perhaps always contrasted with the more structured design of a classroom, made evident through the
library Information Fluency Continuum, which designates the library as “a public forum for learning” (New York City School Library System, n.d., p. 1). This continuum, containing standards and outlining particular benchmarks, calls for the collaborative teaching of inquiry skills by both librarians and classroom teachers, which is outlined as a cycle of asking questions, investigating answers, and constructing and communicating new understandings (New York City School Library System, n.d.). Libraries, in the continuum, are positioned as an effective space to strengthen these types of skills due to their compilations of diverse texts and access to a certified school library media specialist (New York City School Library System, n.d.). The opportunity and support to engage in sustained inquiry-based learning is central to the current conceptions of a school library, as described in the current standards above, although this conception also resonates with its original intentions.

**Background on School Libraries and Librarians**

Over the last 50 years, school libraries have shifted from housing classic books to acculturate children, to information hubs that offer a collection of resources and materials (Michie & Holton, 2005). School libraries have a long history in our nation as democratic institutions, though they “originated as literal colonies of the children's reading rooms in neighborhood public libraries and settlement houses” (Dressman, 1997, p. 271). Here, Dressman (1997) described groups of reading rooms run by women that were designed to share canonical stories to assist new immigrant children in assimilating to American life. This conception of libraries didn’t last, and school libraries have undergone many shifts over the history of schooling in this nation. For example, a 1918 National Education Association (NEA) report stated: “the library should collect materials ‘such as maps,
pictures, lantern slides, and Victrola records” (Midland, 2008, p. 30). In this report were the first instances of a library becoming multimodal, and with the intention of exposing children to many different forms of text. In 1925, the NEA and the American Library Association (ALA) first prepared a suggested set of standards for elementary school libraries, drawn largely from the 1918 NEA report. These standards would later experience many iterations, pointing to evolving and contested notions of literacy and the multiple roles that school libraries might play in literacy education.

The postwar years around 1945 were characterized by efforts to expand the library collection and make available to students a variety of materials (periodicals, films, and slides) in efforts to prepare educated adults for a democratic society (Midland, 2008). In the spirit of American competitiveness, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, followed by the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, marked the first period of funding for school libraries (Michie & Holton, 2005). These pieces of legislation were pivotal in rethinking libraries as essential to children’s literacy development, as well as an educational right.

As the role of school libraries has evolved with political and social changes in our nation’s history and competing definitions of what “counts” as literacy, the purpose of a school librarian has also evolved to support the literacies privileged at the time. As standards for student learning in the library increased, so did expectations for the role that the school librarian would take on, particularly in regards to collaboration with and support of teachers (Barnett, 2015). For example, Barnett (2015) explained that during the middle of the 20th century, librarians were encouraged to participate in the professional development opportunities that were offered to teachers. In this way,
librarians were connected to teachers, and yet their positions still remained distinct. This more significant role of the school librarian, in turn, meant that standards for entrance into the profession rose as well, with preparation programs largely regulated by the ALA and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), although states did (and still do) vary in their specific requirements (Church, Dickinson, Everhart, & Howard, 2012).

Although technology had a presence in library education since the middle of the 20th century, when libraries first began incorporating audiovisual materials (Michie & Holton, 2005), this presence grew stronger. The most recent iteration of the shifting role of the school librarian was evident with the emphasis on digital literacies, and school librarians subsequently being called to lead technology integration in schools (Killeen, 2009). In fact, the ALA and the AASL have included informational technology as standard three out of five of initial librarian preparation in 2010 (Church et al., 2012). Therefore, those who enter the profession have always been implicated by the larger shifts in the field of librarianship, and education in general. Importantly, however, in the already small research base on school librarian preparation (Church et al., 2012; Shannon, 2002), the voices, experiences, and identities of school librarians have been largely absent from the literature.

While school libraries and librarians have afforded unique literacy experiences for students, they have not been immune to the many shifts, priorities, and ideologies that have shaped school institutions throughout history. At the same time, libraries have not been held directly accountable for student achievement. In large part, libraries are a space dissolved of the responsibility to directly produce student outcomes, while a necessary support of the more formal literacy of the school institution. This makes the library a
highly unique and complex space, and the librarian a complex position, one that cannot be reduced to a single role.

Research on School Libraries and Librarians

Research on school libraries has been predominantly rooted within the field of library science and has explored a wide variety of topics within varying ideologies. In *The Library Quarterly*, an interdisciplinary journal of library research, Nitecki (2011) argued: “formal inquiry about library spaces has only recently begun to be conducted and reported, suggesting that spaces mostly have been subjected to descriptive assessments, with few sharable evaluations or evolved theories to inform practice” (p. 28). Within library science, very few studies before 2000 were empirical. An even smaller number focus on elementary school librarians—the vast majority explore high school, college, or academic libraries. Before the year 2000, the literature on school libraries and librarians largely emphasized librarians as teachers, positioning the library as an instructional space that could further the work of the classroom. In the early 2000s, the literature shifted to an overwhelming focus on calls for deeper collaboration between teachers and librarians. The majority of the literature in the early 2000s, however, still appeared in the form of periodicals and opinion pieces—Nitecki’s (2011) “descriptive assessments” (p. 28). In an era where libraries continue to change dramatically, there has been little documentation of the literacy practices circulating in and through libraries, and the experiences of the librarian and children therein. The identities of school librarians are informed by the tensions between the changing field over time, and yet their continuous absence from the research literature.
Multimodality, and access to diverse forms of texts continues to be at the forefront of current research around what a 21st century library education looks like (Gann, 2013), as do discussions around library standards. Mardis and Dickinson (2009), for example, argue that the field of librarianship has always been driven by standards, but has depended on the support from a variety of stakeholders in schools, making implementation of these standards challenging. Interested in standards and student achievement in a library context, Keith Curry Lance is a widely known researcher who studied the impact of school libraries and librarians on student achievement. In a recent piece, Lance and Kachel (2013) explored the perceived connections or disconnections with school library standards in Pennsylvania and student achievement, in order to better understand the ways in which school administrators view the standards as impacting students. Lance and Kachel (2013) found that administrators rated the first library standard—inquiry-based learning—as essential. This pointed, again, to the focus of inquiry in library programs, and was consistent with findings of other scholars and studies (Lance & Kachel, 2013). Although inquiry has a large presence both in the original conception of libraries and in the recent standards of libraries, the impact or effect of the standards has been largely under-researched. The library space is one that has strong ideologies about literacy learning, and yet scholars have largely left these areas unexplored.

Statement of the Problem

Schools are complex institutions. The onset of Common Core, coupled with assessments and punitive accountability systems, is the most recent iteration of attempts
to limit teacher and school autonomy. In this current “ever-increasing wave of testing” (Olivant, 2015, p. 116), teachers and schools are under pressure to produce improved student outcomes, with teachers bearing the brunt of this pressure (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Subsequently, many teachers have felt compelled to directly teach students the content and skills that they need to succeed on these measures lest they be labeled inadequate (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). As a result of this pressure, there is often a narrowing of literacy to what can be assessed, as teachers need to prepare students for the high-stakes tests that they will inevitably encounter (Stahl & Schweid, 2013). This narrowing of curriculum is particularly true in schools that serve high-minority and/or high-poverty demographics of students (Dutro, 2010). This has impacted the culture of the classroom space most significantly, in that a focus on accountability and measurement has left little room for diverse literacy practices and responsive literacy instruction. An emphasis on meeting grade level benchmarks and teaching prescriptive content knowledge has contributed to a “classroom-as-container” discourse (Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010, p. 329), one where the significant literacy learning (and research into literacy learning) is placed neatly within the classroom, and in particular, within the literacy block.

While the library is intended to be a space for inquiry (New York City School Library System, n.d.), as standards for students increase and classrooms become more standardized, content specialists and intervention staff, such as school librarians, are also being called to take on more defined roles within their schools (Uecker, Kelly, & Napierala, 2014)—an “all hands on deck” attitude. As expectations for informational literacy instruction and the integration of technology has increased in the library, so have
calls for school librarians to work closely with teachers, taking on a collaborative role and sharing ownership of student learning, resources, and curriculum (Kimmel, 2012; Montiel-Overall, 2005). New terms, such as teacher-librarian and school library media specialist, point to the increased expectations for schools to integrate digital resources and equip students with the skills needed to access information in a more sophisticated technological world (Killeen, 2009). In this construction, the library becomes more standardized (Uecker et al., 2014), a space that directly supports and extends the standards-based literacy work of the classroom, particularly in “high-risk communities” where library instruction is spent supporting students in “closing word gaps” (Hunsinger, 2015, p. E11). While access to texts and inquiry-based learning may still be viewed as essential, the manner in which they are taught has, in many contexts, narrowed. Librarians are pushed and pulled by multiple external forces that are reshaping schools and the literacy landscape—often in contradictory directions.

Against this background, a contrasting conception of libraries has emerged. Resisting the notion that libraries should become more standardized are those who call them to maintain their democratic principles (Dressman, 1998), where they exist as open spaces to provide students with access to a variety of texts. Some library scholars contend that libraries should transition to a learning commons, a “responsive, flexible, innovative, collaborative, student-centered hub” (Mueller, 2015, p. 1). This mirrors the positioning of libraries as a powerful intellectual and social space for students and teachers to gather (New York City Library System, n.d.). However, studies investigating and documenting the extent to which these spaces exist and are utilized are largely absent from the literature, which limits the understanding of how the conception of a learning commons
might be taken up in practice. The school library is therefore a highly contested site, and school librarians are greatly implicated by these contestations, as are the children who utilize the library space. There is a striking tension between what the literature expects students and librarians to do while in the library (what type of space the library should be), which is compounded by the lack of information about what actually happens in this unique and porous space. In other words, this contested site has gone largely unexplored.

**Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

Informed by a spatial theoretical framework, this case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) investigated the literacy practices that circulated in and through one library space, and the implications that this posed for the librarian and her students. As Leander et al. (2010) assert, examining learning across spaces “is a push to move conversation from where we expect or desire learning to happen to where it does happen” (p. 381). Literacy does not only happen during the formal literacy block of the classroom. Literacy learning is happening in the library, and therefore, I explored the extent to which the library has the potential to push at the boundaries of what literacies are possible and valued in the larger school institution. To do so, I employed ethnographic methods such as observations (including spatial maps), semi-structured interviews, and artifact analysis to investigate the multiple literacy practices that circulated in and through the library space, and what connections these literacies have to the identities of two school librarians and their students. I included four first-grade focal students to look more specifically at the language and literacy practices that students took up in connection with my librarian participants, herein referred to as Amanda and Deborah. I argue that youth were agentive
constructors of literacy and identities across spatial contexts (Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, & Nichols, 2015), and therefore merited inclusion in this study. In beginning my pilot study, Amanda expressed that a focus in primary grades is where she would feel most comfortable situating this inquiry, given her knowledge of and experience with the students. Ultimately, neither Amanda nor Deborah constructed the library space on their own, but rather, in tandem with the students and other individuals who entered the space. Investigating multiple classes provided an opportunity to think across space. While in the same physical room, the social space between different class sessions varied dramatically because the students, their social relationships, and their use of space shaped the space in unique ways.

I position the elementary school library as a complex space that is vital to seeing literacy in new ways in an educational context with increasingly narrowed views of whose knowledge and experience “counts.” On one hand, students had the space to engage with texts in ways that have become limited in the classroom, and where school librarians can invite student inquiry into the space. On the other hand, this inquiry was often met with moments of contention. To investigate this complex space, I asked two inter-related research questions. In these questions, I take up the term produced to refer to the ways in which space was socially produced through materials, bodies, and discourses.

1. What are the ways in which a school library is produced in one urban elementary school?

2. How do two school librarians, and four first-grade focal students, create spaces for literacy in one urban school library, and what is the nature of those spaces?
Overview of the Study

The school site for this dissertation study, City Partnership School, was the same school site in which I conducted my pilot study. Amanda, the original school librarian at City Partnership School, was a veteran classroom teacher who had recently transitioned to the role of the librarian, and thus her background was in classroom instruction and not librarianship. As Amanda’s curricular flexibility increased with her transition from a teacher to the school librarian, so did her desire to use the library space to engage young students in thematic, inquiry-based literacy experiences, with instruction deriving from student interests and questions around a relevant topic through the use of compelling texts (Brown, 2012). Importantly, Amanda’s identity shifted in response to the new possibilities offered by the library space, just as she had the opportunity to shift the space with the various identities (Moje & Luke, 2009) that she brought to it. Because Amanda had experience teaching in primary grades, and this is where she located her expertise, she was most interested in exploring this inquiry with young students. This dissertation study was a means to work alongside Amanda’s vision of the library as a potentially inclusive learning space.

However, due to the contested nature of school libraries, Amanda was asked at the beginning of the school year to return to the classroom to fill a sudden vacancy. Despite her desire to stay in the library, and her hope that this was a short-term solution, Amanda remained in the classroom for the rest of the school year. Thus, my study continued with the substitute librarian, Deborah, a staple substitute at City Partnership School and veteran teacher. Therefore, my dissertation sought to study the literacy practices that both Amanda and Deborah, and four focal children, took up in the space of
the library, and the ways in which they took them up. This work builds on the work of literacy scholars (Moje & Luke, 2009; Janks, 2009; Gee, 2000-2001; Street, 2005) who have argued that literacy is social, and have looked at the ways in which literate identities are constructed through the language and literacy practices that individuals employ and the spaces in which they employ them (Sheehy, 2010; Soja, 1996).

As one other space for literacy in schools, I explored the library as situated within a problematic disagreement about how libraries should be utilized—either as democratic sites that provide access to a range of texts (Dressman, 1998), or as sites of direct instruction in standards-aligned informational literacy (Uecker et al., 2014). Ultimately, if schools hope to invest in their school librarians and reframe the space of the library as an inclusive and potentially transformative literacy learning environment (Mueller, 2015), which I argue is a step towards a more equitable education, a firsthand understanding of what literacies are already circulating in and through the school library space is essential.

**Rationale for the Study**

The library as a case study addresses the ways that both scholars and practitioners conceptualize and examine literacies and identities in schools by working against the dichotomy of inside- and outside-of-school literacies. It illuminates the importance of examining other spaces in the school setting where both students and adults construct their identities, understanding that the classroom space is just one of many that are traversed in everyday life (Leander et al., 2010) as individuals construct their literate lives. This works against the notion that a school library is a static container (Leander et al., 2010), and instead positions it as complex, social, and continually evolving.
Given the paucity of research on school libraries, my study adds to the body of empirical research on literacies in library spaces and has implications for literature exploring the professional identity of school librarians. Much of the literature on elementary school libraries does not provide accounts of the literacies that students and librarians take up. Partially as a result of this, Everhart (2013) has argued: “this lack of knowledge [of the school librarian’s role] has led to disappearance of jobs and denied student access to the skills that school librarians bring to twenty-first-century learners” (p. 15). Empirical studies that explore the wide variety of literacy practices and materials that librarians and students engage with in the library are needed to better understand the potential of the space in this era of standards, and could inform policy around funding, expectations, and opportunities for school librarians when “the sustainability of the school librarian position is questionable” (Everhart, 2013, p. 15). Of course, the school library isn’t the only space for student inquiry in literacy. However, if not the school library, then where are the other spaces for student inquiry, particularly in underserved areas with lack of access to diverse and culturally relevant literacy materials (Rivas, 2012)? Rather than let libraries become obsolete, or reserved for privileged schools with a surplus of funding, I argue for the need to re-position the space of a school library as one example of an other space for literacy in schools, and to investigate the ways in which school librarians and their students produce this unique space.

**Theoretical Framework**

I situate this study within a spatial theoretical framework. In taking up spatial theory, I argue that language and identity are constructed spatially—allowing some things
to go unseen or to become the “underbelly” (Sheehy, 2010) of social processes, rather than attending to the nuanced interactions in and across the space. Because this study took place in the library, a spatial framework allowed me to explore how Amanda, Deborah, and their students constructed the space, and what literacies they took up in the process. Additionally, this framework illuminated the way that the students (Mark, Nikki, Carla, and James) utilized the space to construct social identities with each other. In positioning the library as a fluid and dynamic space (Leander et al., 2010), therefore, I sought to understand the various connections and knowledge constructed in the space, and consider the ways in which Amanda, Deborah, are their students were influenced by these connections and knowledge.

In this dissertation, I position myself within the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which frames literacy as situated within social and cultural frameworks (Giampapa, 2010), rather than as neutral or autonomous sets of skills. The literacy events that occurred in the library space were therefore mediated by the sociocultural histories, and the various identities, that the students and school librarians brought to the library, while in turn librarian and student identities and literacies were mediated by the library space. Therefore, embedded in the spatial framework that I take up are implications for considering identities in and across various spaces.

The Complexity of Space

Spaces, such as libraries, have unique histories, social norms, and beliefs about “doing literacy.” In this study, I took up conceptions of space as socially constructed in efforts to understand its complexity, and to move beyond merely discussing libraries as rooms within buildings. A pioneer of spatial theory and French philosopher, Henri
Lefebvre, argued that historicality, sociality, and spatiality were too complex and essential to be siloed in individual disciplines. Spatial theory is a type of critical theory (Soja, 1996), with Lefebvre drawing his philosophical roots from Marxism, and in large part, the theory seeks to work toward social progress, uncovering the ways in which a simplistic definition of space has reproduced inequitable geographic borders and barriers. I utilized spatial theory to uncover the ways in which power circulated in and through networks of space to privilege some literacy practices over others. Therefore, I took a critical lens to my use of spatial theory to better understand how some students were constructed as more “literate” than others, and how the construction and use of social space contributes to this unequal power distribution in schools. Contemporary scholars have taken these notions and continued to work with them in seeking spatial justice, Edward Soja being chief among them. I took up Soja’s (1996) definitions of the spatial dimensions—Firstspace (Lefebvre’s physical), Secondspace (Lefebvre’s mental), and Thirdspace (Lefebvre’s lived)—in my own work.

While this dissertation took place primarily in the school library, distinctly different from a traditional elementary school classroom, I followed Soja (2004) in the belief that “every space and place in the world becomes readable or interpretable as a classroom” (p. xi), in that learning is happening whether the space is marked for official learning or not (Dyson, 2003). Both the traditional classroom and school library are pedagogically complex, and though they function uniquely, I read both through a spatial frame, ultimately with the objective of understanding the space as lived. However, because space is a site of constant change, spatial knowledge can never be exact, as space is merely studied within particular points in time (Moje, 2004). Space is always moving
and can never be pinned down or fully measured. I argue that by taking on a spatial framework, the ways in which literacies circulated in spaces over time, to privilege some practices over others, might be exposed and interrupted.

**What is Space? Place vs. Space**

A distinction between place and space is critical, one primary reason being that place-based education has received much attention in recent years. Place is one dimension of space, but is not synonymous. Place refers to a bounded setting (Nespor, 2008), independent of human activity. The traditional way of teaching geography—as separate from history, culture, politics, and even social interaction—is a clear example of this. Furthermore, Nespor (2008) contends that advocates of place-based education conflate “place” with “community,” which results in community education often being reduced to “a stable, bounded, self-sufficient communal realm” (p. 479), focused primarily on geography whilst ignoring historical, political, and cultural considerations. Unlike conceptions of “place” which are static, “space” is a process and a site of constant change (Sheehy, 2010; Soja, 1996). The studying of space, therefore, demands a nuanced view of how spaces actually have historical, cultural, and social dimensions. In this way, space is like identity. It is a site that is constantly shifting.

School is made of places and language, and children construct identities as they move through those places and utilize language. The physical place and the spoken words matter, and yet they are not all that matters—school is more than this, and a library is more than this. Place and words, when taken up by individuals, have meaning and are imbued with power. Sheehy (2004) argues: “according to Lefebvre, space was not environment, not stage setting, and not place; yet it involved each of these, which came to
be significant as a result of how they became engaged in and changed by social practices” (p. 95). Space involves culture, social interactions, and the passage of time, all which converge in complex ways. The library is a unique space, as in many ways it is offered greater flexibility and freedom than the classroom space (in terms of curriculum and assessment), while being more rigidly bound by chunks of time. Recent ways of theorizing space argue that it isn’t a receptacle—it is dynamic, fluid, and is a set of relations. Taking a more simplistic and contained view of space, where space is thought of as a receptacle where things happen, serves in “blocking from view how space is actively involved in generating and sustaining inequality, injustice, economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and discrimination” (Soja, 2010, p. 4). This view reproduces notions of what literacy looks like, and what a literate child does, while in the library. Failing to see space as dynamic serves to reinforce the status quo and to actively resist change. For this reason, examining the school library as a room with books, people, and instruction was insufficient. I approached the library space as socially and culturally produced and reproduced across time, while still acknowledging its physical space and materials.

A key tenet of spatial theory is that knowledge, beliefs, and discourses flow in and out of spaces. While a space certainly has discourses or language-in-use (Gee, 2005) that circulate within, these are not static, as discourses are continually being added to and change within and across spatial “boundaries” to create larger patterns of social membership. When Amanda took on the position of the school librarian, for example, she reconfigured the space to reflect the new knowledge and beliefs that she brought to the space, notably about the power of inquiry. Subsequently, when Deborah came into the
library, she simultaneously brought her identity, interests, and values and again shifted the space. Furthermore, key in distinguishing between space and place is that space also takes on a temporal lens. The library at City Partnership School, like many other school libraries, organized “library time” in 45-minute increments, therefore boundaries were constructed between “library time” and what was not library time. A spatial and temporal lens seeks to disrupt this dichotomy (Wilson, 2004), instead conceptualizing how space is organized through networks and intersections of time and space.

Social and temporal space is not stagnant, and therefore a library is not stagnant. A library shifts, changes, and evolves as new children enter it, pick up and discard materials, and literally or figuratively leave their mark on the library. A library shifts as the librarian selects new books to order and display. A library changes to reflect events, values, and politics of the time. The library, subsequently, leaves its mark on the children, as a space where they interact with people, texts, knowledge, values, and language. Of course, these marks will vary, as not all libraries are the same. While some children may find that they are given the freedom to take up new literacies, other library spaces may restrict literacies that do not adhere to expected practices. A library, therefore, is not a monolithic space.

Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace

As stated above, I took up Soja’s (1996) conceptions of Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace in my own dissertation work. Firstspace included spoken language, physical arrangements, and other elements that are directly observable. Lefebvre labeled the Firstspace the observable—it is a sensible, cognitive space where social interactions can be directly seen and heard. Secondspace, on the other hand, is a conceived space. In
other words, the Secondspace is the “cover story”—the discourses that people use to explain and make sense of Firstspace. Importantly, the Secondspace operates dialectically with the Firstspace; the Secondspace gives the Firstspace meaning—it codifies it (Sheehy, 2010). I took up Gee’s (2000-2001) conception of Discourse (capital D) to refer to this discursive perspective, which consisted of the details of the language melded with non-language elements such as clothing, gestures, symbols, materials, and the body, all which were utilized by individuals to assert group membership in the eyes of the “other” (Gee, 2005). Amanda could be viewed with an institutional perspective, within Soja’s (1996) observable Firstspace, as a librarian who shares resources and information with teachers in the school. However, she could also be read with a discursive perspective (Gee, 2000-2001) as a librarian who desired to integrate choice, as well as inquiry-based and student-directed instruction to allow students the “free reading” and “browsing” that she believed had been limited in the classroom—Soja’s (1996) Secondspace.

Spatial theories are relatively new in the field of literacy studies. Sheehy (2010) addresses this emerging field and her own interest in spatializing literacy with: “it is a Firstspace desire, however. If it is to happen, Secondspace needs to be reorganized and researched, so we can learn how to effect change—at the level of systems, and within the whole trialectic” (p. 131). Simply bringing in a different text, a new lesson, or re-arranging the room won’t affect change if the way that we think about it (and use it) does not. By attending to Secondspace in one school library context, I argued that the potential for rethinking the materials, language, and arrangements of the Firstspace was made possible when these dimensions work in tandem.
Thirdspace, a more abstract concept, “interrupts the rationality of First- and Secondspace” (Sheehy, 2010, p. 14). It is a lived space, where change is constant, where social life is constantly moving, churning, and changing. Thirdspace is a felt space. It is not rational. It is not easily explainable. Sheehy (2010) explains: “Thirdspace may not be a conscious space, but it is a feeling space that does not rationalize what is going on. It feels what is going on and relates to space without regard for appropriateness. Appropriateness belongs to Secondspace” (p. 14). Thirdspace is a site of radical social change. It is a space of interruption, which can “split open and undercut what is perceived and conceived as normal” (Sheehy, 2010, p. 16). Thirdspace cannot be seen, as Firstspace can, and it cannot be objectively traced. Patterns of talk, text, and behaviors are ways of thinking about identity that are important. However, Thirdspaces also demand attention, because they disrupt the status quo and can be a source of social change. They force us to think outside the patterns of what is normal, outside the Secondspace discourses to which we have often become accustomed. Janks (2009), building on the work of Soja and others, argues that Thirdspace can begin to disrupt powerful binaries between “us” and “them,” and can introduce new ways of approaching culture, language, and identity. The Secondspace discourses, therefore, construct what “counts” as reading, and who can be considered a reader, while the Thirdspace can trouble these discourses. The Thirdspace of the library merits examination because those disruptions in the discourses around what “counts” as reading—other types of literacy practices that emerge in the library—have the power to then become patterns themselves. In other words, Thirdspace interruptions allow us to consider what else might be possible.
Multiple Conceptions of Thirdspace

Kris Gutiérrez (2008) in many ways, presents conceptions of Third Space that overlap with the spatial theory (in particular, Thirdspace) that Soja (1996) presents. For example, both scholars approach their work with a critical stance, arguing that research and education are inherently power-laden, and aim to use these spatial theories to expose power imbalances within space (for Soja, this draws from his work as a critical geographer). Gutiérrez (2008) on the other hand, draws from “repertoires of practice” (p. 149) to demonstrate that within schooling, students learn across multiple contexts, and asks schools to create spaces that might also include the local knowledge that students bring. Therefore, both Gutiérrez (2008) and Soja (1996) believe that space is fluid and non-linear, rather than contained and stagnant. Similarly, then, learning and literacy do not develop across linear trajectories.

Gutiérrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995), drawing on this notion of Third Space in their work, argues that it is a site of intersection, in particular, an intersection between the teacher script and the student counterscript. In this conception, change occurs when the teacher script is permeated by the student counterscript, and the transformative space occurs when both teacher and student voice is permitted and valued in the space—and the space is ultimately restructured. Until blended in the Thirdspace, then, the teacher script and student counterscript may function independently. In a similar vein, Soja (1996) contends that Thirdspace is an interruption in the physical and discursive dimensions of space. However, rather than an intersection, I see Soja’s (1996) spatial dimensions as layered. The Thirdspace is not an intersection between the First- and Secondspace, for example, but it is an interruption that cuts across both the First- and Secondspace. For
both theories, the Third Space/Thirdspace is a site of something new and potentially, unexpected. Ultimately, Gutiérrez (2008) and Soja (1996) frame the Third Space/Thirdspace differently, but their conceptions aren’t at odds. Both scholars aim to position space and fluid, and further this theory to ultimately disrupt unequal power balances and work toward greater social justice.

For Gutiérrez (2008) and Soja (1996), the Third Space/Thirdspace can provide a site for transformative learning. However, Gutiérrez (2008) more recently describes Third Space as something that is deliberately constructed, both by teacher and students for the purpose of transformational learning. The Third Space is strategic, and yet is contested (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lipez, & Turner, 1997). Gutiérrez (2008) describes examples of the restructuring of Third Space, one where instructors can rethink instructional questioning and pedagogy to work towards a more democratic space. For example, she details one instance where “the pedagogy and curriculum of the program are designed to create opportunities to collectively generate new forms of joint activity (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 160) to better solve and attend to issues that immigrant students may face upon entering schools. Ultimately, then, this Third Space is transformative, as is Soja’s.

Soja (1996) positions Thirdspace more explicitly as a site of disruption. It is a space that cuts across and interrupts the First- and Secondspace of daily life. Therefore, Soja’s (1996) Thirdspace cannot be deliberately planned and constructed—it is inherently an interruption. Once the space is planned and constructed intentionally, it becomes the First- and Secondspace. As Soja (1996) argues, this is ultimately the goal—to change the First- and Secondspace. However, the Thirdspace is reserved for interruption, for dissonance, as these interruptions are ultimately what prompt us to rethink the other
dimensions of space. On the other hand, Soja’s (1996) Thirdspace, while always an interruption, may not always be a transformative space. It depends on how it is attended to and then used. For example, the Thirdspace interruption could be ignored and dismissed as an isolated unexpected event, or it could be used as a tool to rethink instruction. This diverges from Gutiérrez’s (2008) conception of Third Space, she argues can be organized in ways that promote more transformational and collaborative learning.

Ultimately, then, Gutiérrez (2008) and Soja (1996) present conceptions of space that are similar and yet distinct. Both work toward greater spatial justice and aim to disrupt unequal distributions of power in teaching and learning, although they do this in slightly different ways. For Soja (1996), the Thirdspace is always an interruption in the seemingly normal, and it always remains an interruption that has the potential to rethink space. On the other hand, Gutiérrez (2008) contends that Third Space can be deliberately constructed in more equitable and transformational ways. I choose to take up Soja’s (1996) conception in efforts to continue to focus on the interruptions in the library space, and to consider what those interruptions might do, or have the potential to do.

Just as spaces cannot be easily compartmentalized, neither can identities. I follow Zacher (2009), who argues that identity cannot be separated from the spaces—geographic, social, and cultural—that an individual traverses. As she follows a focal student (Christina), Zacher (2009) demonstrates how Christina’s identity as a young girl who walked in and through different kinds of urban spaces matters—labeling them in relation to one another, some imbued with more power than others. Amanda’s history within the urban school district in which she worked was not singular nor is it linear—she took on multiple roles and traversed many types of spaces all within and across the
organization over time. Her long-standing personal friendships with several staff members, professional history as a veteran employee of the school district, and her recent move to the library space from the classroom worked in conjunction to curate a social and professional identity from the multiple positions (Moje & Luke, 2009) that she took up. Also a veteran teacher, Deborah was well-known as a substitute at City Partnership School. Like Amanda, she brought in her personal history, as well as her desires to share books with children and plan engaging, thematic activities, such as a cornucopia project around Thanksgiving. These spatial shifts are intimately tied to the identities of the individuals who traverse the space, but the shifts are not without messiness. The Thirdspace is what allows us to get outside of the First- and Secondspace—to think differently, dream differently, and perhaps see possibilities that we hadn’t seen before.

**A Social Justice Perspective on Space**

Power is inextricably linked to the language and literacies taken up in various spaces, the struggle for language rights being tied up with the struggle for human rights (Freire, 1983; Janks, 2009). I follow Vasquez (2007), among others, in asserting that even young students are actually already engaging in this critical interpretive work by reading their own communities and the other various spaces that they traverse. For example, the recent remake of the movie *Annie* (Lassiter & Gluck, 2014) discusses Harlem as largely a hub of poor and disadvantaged children, a world away from the corporate offices and wealthy elites of midtown Manhattan. Young children, who view this popular text, might internalize or challenge these portrayals of their community, though they construct identities in and through these portrayals whether these critiques are welcome in schools or not. The shift to sociocultural conceptions of literacy brought to light the ways in
which literacy has historically been used to oppress groups of people, and therefore, certain identity markers such as race, class, and gender. Recognizing the impact of standardization on student identities, both Amanda and Deborah positioned the library as creating the space for “leisure” reading regardless of reading levels or other markers of reading proficiency. In doing so, they both provided the space for students who might not be considered proficient at “schooled literacy” (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) to experience literacy in the library. This blurring of literacy and identity lines therefore requires a spatial framing that situates space as dynamic, constructed socially, and in relation to individuals and other spaces (Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Soja, 1996).

Critical in discussions around equity and justice are issues of access, and in particular, access to digital literacies. Digital literacies are rapidly shifting the landscape of school libraries and the positioning of school librarians, as information mobilizes more rapidly across spaces through the use of technology. In some spaces, advances in technology have replaced books themselves, shifting the space. Janks (2009) discussed literacy and technology in her assertion that “in the information age, the literacy stakes are therefore higher and, as always, there is a differential access to the newer literacy technologies, the latest means of production and the elite literacies that they enable” (p. 4). How do we give our students access to these forms of text, while using them in a way that integrates multiple perspectives and ways of thinking about the world? Although technologies are called for in librarianship literature, they are not often called to do this in the critical way that Janks (2009) and other literacy scholars advocate for. Building on this, I believe that “not only do we need to redefine what ‘literacy’ involves, but also to note new uses of the term text” (Bearne, 2005, p. 13), including the digital texts that have
broadened the type of literacies that students engage with. Technology can be used as a tool to work towards social justice, but this means that simply integrating technology is not enough—it needs to be used with equity in mind, towards the inclusion of all literate identities.

In this study, I investigated the ways in which the social space impacted what literacies are possible. As the space of the library shifted, the librarians shifted within it. The identity of the librarians, therefore, were connected to the space, but these connections did not work in isolation. The sociopolitical context of schooling and libraries, access to resources, and multiple other forces also influenced the space and the individuals who traversed it. In the concept of “thickening” identities and positions being layered upon others (Moje & Luke, 2009), was the often omission of the sudden tensions that one might feel when they encounter a new position or spatial shift, which might be dismissed as an aberration. I argue that new and contentious positions that individuals take up are actually the result of spatial shifts—both of the literal and metaphorical, which is why it is essential to integrate space, identity, and literacy. Taking both a spatial and identity lens to literacy studies can serve as a site for deconstruction, critique, and ultimately, possibility.

**Significance of the Study**

This dissertation presented an opportunity to see what was possible when two school librarians identified as agentive constructors of learning and were in a space that, in some ways, diverged from the stringent standards of accountability imposed on classrooms while being simultaneously constrained in others. While what is possible in
classrooms continue to narrow (Olivant, 2015), attending to school libraries opens other possibilities for academic inquiry and critical engagement with texts. This study documented, in-depth, one such other space in order to interrogate which literacy practices circulated in the space, and how the identities of the school librarians and students were taken up in and through these literacies. This positions other spaces, such as school libraries, as a fluid nexus where ideologies, pedagogies, and literacies intersect, often with tensions. Though this offers just one case, and is therefore not generalizable beyond this immediate population, discovering what is possible in one space can offer fruitful discussion around the potential of school libraries to strengthen literacy experiences in schools for our young students who are most implicated by narrow definitions of literacy (Dutro, 2010). This, therefore, is an issue of equity and access in the midst of budget cuts and staffing problems, many of which are felt in public schools situated in large cities, such as City Partnership School (Everhart, 2000a).

Of course, the library is just one example of an other space. Ultimately, this study demonstrates the possibility of other spaces for students to engage in inquiry and to connect with texts and with each other. After all, language, literacies, identities, and spaces are collaboratively constructed. In a time when classrooms continue to become more constrained and limited in what definitions of literacy they are able to take up, there is an urgent need to look to other spaces where literacy also happens, and might happen in transformative ways. This has the potential to disrupt the dominant discourses about who is literate (Campano & Damico, 2007), where literacy takes place, and the role of the library and librarian therein. In studying the school library as one such other space (of
I argue that educators can reframe what is possible in the nuanced, and yet often dismissed, other spaces of an elementary school.
When we picture elementary school libraries, we typically picture reading. For some, literacy is defined as autonomous and linear reading skills. However, different people take up literacy differently, with many overlapping and contentious beliefs about what it is, who has it, and how to best teach and study it. For others (Heath, 1982; Street, 2005; Luke, 2012), literacy is not autonomous skills, but is a way of looking at and making sense of the world. I take this latter stance. In this view, Janks (2009) asks us to consider, “What then is the usefulness of the word literacy? Why do we need it?” (p. 1).

This chapter traces different perspectives on the notion of literacy, and frames libraries as one literacy-based institution of many. There is dissonance in my work because I seek to bring a spatial theoretical framework to the studying of the library, while considering implications for identity, whereas the field of librarianship has typically framed identity within descriptions of tasks, roles, and status (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000; Johnston, 2012). Lytle (2000), drawing on Pratt (1991), describes contact zones as places where cultures meet. She takes up and uses this metaphor to describe the intersection of practitioner and academic research, whereas I draw from the contact zone metaphor to illustrate the tensions between the field of librarianship and the literacy studies field, which have separate and distinct beliefs about literacy, institutional cultures, and ways of “doing research.” The legacies of each field (Lytle, 2000) are often seemingly at odds, and I have encountered tensions in my own work in trying to reconcile a literacy studies
framework with a social site of research that has not traditionally been situated within this framework. I sought to find ways to bridge literacy studies with the space of the library, in attempts to better discover what literacy practices the librarians, and their students, were taking up (and how).

In the sections that follow, I trace perspectives on literacy, and then look to other spaces (that differ from classrooms) to think through the wide range of literacy practices that circulate through school institutions. In my desire to position libraries as spaces for inclusive literacies, I also discuss the distinct history of the library institution. Finally, I examine several bodies of scholarly work that have studied the identity of school librarians, in order to better situate this particular dissertation in the existing literature.

Perspectives on Literacy

Literacy has been taken up differently in different spaces and is researched in a broad range of fields (literacy studies, library science, policy, early childhood, etc.). While this dissertation largely focused on how literacies circulate in school library spaces, I cannot discuss literacy in the library without also attending to literacy in the school at large, as school libraries must be contextualized within the school. I frame literacy within a socially situated perspective, as I believe that literacy is deeply and inherently connected with ideology and identity. In particular, I approach the literature—and notions of literacy—from theories of space (Sheehy, 2010; Soja, 1996) to examine the ways in which the library is produced through discourses (Gee, 2000-2001), texts, and the identities of the individuals therein.
**Schooled Literacies**

Street and Street (1995) ask us to consider how it is that one particular variety of literacy has come to be seen as the only literacy, at least in the policies of formal schooling. When literacy is discussed, evaluated, and taught in classrooms, it is typically of a “schooled” nature—one drawn from standards, assessments, and a universal and hierarchical skill-set assumption, where classroom spaces are also assumed to be inherently similar. That is, taking up schooled literacies often has the potential to reproduce assumptions that classrooms and schools are ideologically neutral spaces, and students can therefore acquire literacy within these spaces. Jenny Cook-Gumperz (1986) has argued that it is through this “process of classroom exchanges, learning-group formation, through informal judgments and standardized tests and all the other evaluative apparatus of schooling that our notions of schooled literacy are formed” (p. 2). Schooled literacies are not just autonomous ways of thinking about literacy. Schooled literacy is a social construction, one that is reproduced through the process of tests, evaluation, and instruction, which produce certain notions about who is a reader and how one becomes a reader. While autonomous literacies, defined here as seemingly sets of neutral competencies (Street & Street, 1995), often do get taken up in schooled literacies, it is important to note that “schooling is not only knowing how to do things but demonstrating this knowing in the correct contexts” (Cook-Gumperz, 1986, p. 7). Being a “good reader” in school, therefore, isn’t just having the skills to decode words accurately, it is also knowing what textual response is acceptable, when to raise your hand, how to navigate the space, and how to talk about books (often in a socially-classed manner). In other words, the autonomous model of literacy, which appears often in schooled literacy
practices, refers to the neutral and discrete skills that can, assumedly, be taught and
learned regardless of context (Street & Street, 1995).

Schooled literacy is perhaps most often of an autonomous and skills-based nature
by virtue of its connection to assessment, although it isn’t necessarily so. Even more
progressive and critical literacy practices can become “schooled” as students learn which
types of responses to literature are valued in the classroom (Heath, 1982) and how they
should (or should not) utilize the space. Drawing on Cook-Gumperz’ (1986) definition of
schooled literacy, Street and Street (1995) contend that this narrow focus of literacy,
considered primarily to operate in the contained space of the classroom, has dismissed
other forms of literacy that ethnographic research has brought to light.

As Willis (1997) contends: “there is no singular history of literacy, nor is there a
singular definition of literacy” (p. 388). Early research into literacy took the form of
“laboratory-like studies of reading predominantly focused upon ‘inside-the-head’
processes tied to word and sentence recognition” (Tierney, 2014, p. 34), pointing to a
valuing of autonomous forms of literacy in the academy. Informed by policies such as No
Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Common Core State Standards movement, corresponding
assessments, and stringent teacher evaluations, the literacies that still prevail the most in
schools are taught and assessed in a skills-based manner. For example, in an analysis of a
teacher toolkit to assist with NCLB mandates, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006) uncover
language in the policy purporting that “scientifically based reading instruction can and
does work for all children” (p. 673). Because these policies are so narrow, in classrooms
that don’t trouble schooled literacies, teachers typically define and control texts, papers,
materials, and the organization of time and space (Street & Street, 1995), often at the expense of a responsive and fluid curriculum.

Libraries, in turn, have often been conceptualized in relation to the literacy privileged in classroom spaces and have operated distinctly, yet alongside classrooms. Historically, “schools might specialize in teaching reading skills, but libraries could ensure moral and intellectual betterment, and cultivating and elevating of tastes” (Sensenig, 2010-2011, p. 11). Libraries were expected to promote literature and literacy, while the classrooms taught “fundamental” cognitive skills. Therefore, when children’s reading skills became a national concern in response to events like the Sputnik launch and the report *A Nation at Risk*, scientific intervention programs that focused on explicit instruction received more attention. Meanwhile, the “democratically driven learning tools like libraries” (Sensenig, 2010-2011, p. 15) were set to the side to operate separately, as they assumedly didn’t have a direct impact on academic achievement as measured through test scores. This points to school libraries as a contested site, one that is often (though not always) more democratic and inclusive in principle, and yet is situated within the larger, more standardized school institution. Literacy, then, might be taken up in school libraries in ways that they may not be able to in traditional classrooms. The uniqueness and complexity of the library space offers possibilities for inquiring into what literacies are possible in schools. Therefore, the library has the potential to problematize the concept of “schooled” literacies (Cook-Gumperz, 1986), as it provides a space within the larger school site where literacy may indeed manifest quite differently than expected.
Literacies as Socially Situated

While schooled literacies have dominated public education, the notion of getting beneath skills-based reading tasks is not new and has offered a more complex way of conceptualizing literacy and literacy education. Many scholars, with varying ideologies and conceptions of literacy, have studied literacies within their socially situated contexts. Rosenblatt (1969), for example, advocated for a transactional approach to reading, in which she argued: “the reader is active. He is not a blank tape registering a ready-made message” (p. 34). The text, therefore, is an essential part of this transaction, but it is not the only part. Barton and Hamilton (1998) later posited that literacy, like all human activity, is rooted within social interaction. To understand various social literacy practices, however, these practices must be situated within their space-time contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The notion of socially situated literacies, therefore, directly resists the belief that literacies are universal, and that the spaces where students take up literacies are universal. Further, the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) emerged in response to the autonomous, linear view of literacy, where Street (2005) argued for a broader definition of literacy and a rethinking of who might be considered literate. NLS takes the stance that literacy is first and foremost social, and is how people make sense of their daily lives. Despite the skills-based approach to teaching literacy most privileged in schools, NLS argues that literacy cannot be “given neutrally” (Street, 2005) in a one-size-fits-all approach, because it is already something that exists in everyday lives. NLS rejects literacy as a linear and contained model (Luke, 2012), arguing that it is fluid, complex, and contextually dependent. Therefore, literacies are socially situated, but they are also spatially situated (Leander & Sheehy, 2004).
Shirley Brice Heath’s (1982) sociocultural work, in particular, was seminal in examining the ways in which different socially situated literacies meet—a type of “contact zone” (Lytle, 2000; Pratt, 1991). Theorizing the “literacy event,” Heath (1982) argued that interactions with written texts are socially and culturally situated, rather than neutral or autonomous. Many other scholars have taken up sociocultural perspectives within literacy studies, further problematizing the notion that literacy is universal in a wide variety of contexts, both inside and outside of schools. Dyson’s (1992) work, for example, was pivotal in demonstrating how young children are sociocultural beings who use literacy in unique and complex ways, arguing for ethnographic research to more deeply understand children's literacies as socially situated and enacted. Her work in primary classrooms has helped illuminate how students resist schooled literacy practices by “remixing” official and unofficial literacies, bringing their own social knowledge into the cultural space of the classroom (Dyson, 2003).

However, also crucial to examining literacy as socially situated is the understanding that literacy practices are raced, classed, and gendered. For example, Commeyras, Orellana, Bruce, and Neilsen (1996) argued against a viewing of culture and social groups as monolithic, which can easily be done if these identity markers are not attended to. In doing so, they argued that “we lose sight of how males and females often learn to take up those practices in different ways or to construct very different meanings of them” (Commeyras et al., 1996, p. 460). Therefore, even within studying literacy as socially and culturally situated, identity markers such as race, class, and gender must be acknowledged. As Commeyras et al. (1996) contended, gender issues are central to literacy. Therefore, often operating alongside sociocultural theory are types of critical
pedagogies, which do attend quite explicitly to the various identity markers that are taken up within literacy practices. Freire (1983), considered the pioneer of critical literacy pedagogy, sought to explicitly explore relationships between literacy and power, and explained: “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 10). Ultimately, these many takes on socially situated literacies have provided an alternate paradigm to the studying, teaching, and theorizing of literacy, arguing that any interpretation of text is done within some frame of reference, perspective, and experience. However, while literacy has been redefined and contested over time, the autonomous and linear model of literacy has continued to prevail in most classrooms, with the role of the library to subsequently provide children with access to texts in a more leisurely environment. However, this has shifted in response to increased standards, assessments, and accountability measures imposed on schools and, in particular, school librarians (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999).

**Other Spaces for Literacy in Schools**

Scholars who situate themselves in NLS have largely used ethnographic research to investigate the ways in which teachers might engage students in different forms of literacy even within the constraints of standardized literacy practices and curricula. Many literacy scholars (Dutro, 2010; Dyson, 2003; Rist, 1970) and have studied these varied practices within the classroom context, with others (Bloome & Enciso, 2006; Heath, 1982) focused on outside-of-school literacies. While both classroom and community spaces are essential, I turned to other spaces for literacy in schools (that are different from classrooms), as these spaces are held to less accountability measures, and therefore often
lend themselves to more unique and varied literacy practices. I conceive of these other spaces as “trajectories” with porous boundaries (Leander et al., 2010), resisting the model of both classrooms and libraries as containers.

**Student Agency in Other Spaces**

The term “other spaces” (Foucault, 1986) refers to spaces that are distinct, and often diverge from, orderly and utopic spaces. Libraries and museums, Foucault (1986) explained, are examples of sites with multiple and complex spaces within it, where time continues to accumulate more fluidly. Time and space in libraries and museums, therefore, is not bound in the way that traditional classrooms often are. In this way, “unofficial” spaces, even within larger official sites, might be analyzed as an other space. For example, in an ethnographic study of a classroom of African-American first graders, Dyson (2003) examined the ways in which students brought cultural and popular texts to their school literacy practices, blurring the lines between the official and unofficial literacy spaces. By creating the space for other literacies to enter the classroom, such as group singing and radio play, the teacher created a curriculum that left space for student agency. Dyson (2003) argued that the children “benefited from a curriculum that was ‘permeable,’ that made space for and productively engaged their social and symbolic—their textual—resources” (p. 356). This agency and freedom in integrating multiple literacy practices is key to encouraging inclusivity of student identity markers. These unique spaces, where the official and unofficial worlds of school often coincide, are not without tensions. This mirrors the dissonance Campano (2007) described in navigating between the second classroom and the standardized classroom in one urban school.
As Campano (2007) illustrated, tensions between literacies “[points] toward a possible resolution, affirming the need for teachers to cultivate multiple curricula that meet bureaucratic demands as well as the personal needs and capacities of our increasingly diverse student populations” (p. 39). He introduced the idea of a “second classroom,” one that teachers can co-construct on the margins of the mandated curricula. The second classroom was built around student identities, interests, values, and knowledge, though often without recognition by the school institution. Campano (2007) conceptualized this second classroom as an other space, where students were literate and knowledgeable beings even within a school system that had deemed them deficient. Campano (2007) argued that to truly do service to students, we must work “both within and against dominant curricular practices” (p. 109), taking a stance similar to what Delpit (2006) advocates. Understanding the schooled (and often cognitive) way of literacy, while simultaneously resisting it, is essential to thinking about the literacies that might also be privileged in the library, another pedagogical and ideological (Campano, 2007) space that can offer students the opportunity to be literate in ways that traditional classrooms might not (or cannot).

In another such study occurring in an other space, education scholars Blair and Sanford (2004) presented an ethnographic case study of six classrooms, with the purpose of examining preadolescent and adolescent boys’ use of literacy during non-instructional times. Although this study did take place in the traditional classroom space, it was outside of the instructional day, and therefore was open to different student activities. Here, Blair and Sanford (2004) rejected achievement scores as a valuable way to “measure” literacy and sought to study the ways in which adolescent boys actually engaged in literacy when
given more freedom of time and space. This study took place in a classroom, during recess and partially on computers. Positioning literacy as social and seeking to counteract the notion that boys are “failing” at school (Blair & Sanford, 2004, p. 453), they contended that their male participants exhibited a great amount of agency—they resisted many school-based practices by transforming the assigned work into something more personally fun, engaging, meaningful, humorous, active, and purposeful” (p. 453). In doing so, Blair and Sanford (2004) positioned the use of student-selected texts and visual texts as a platform to connect socially with one another around shared interests, which contrasted with the texts that were assigned to them during classroom instruction. In other words, the boys used digital texts, sports magazines, and comic books with agency, to engage in literacy and to solidify their membership in a social group. Blair and Sanford (2004) argued that exploring other spaces (in this case, the classroom at other times) can bring to light the way that boys’ literacies are complex and fluid, whereas only studying the literacy practices of the instructional day might reify notions that the boys in the study were “failing” at school.

Blair and Sanford (2004) explicitly focused on preadolescent and adolescent boys in their piece, making a deliberate distinction for showing the particular communication patterns of males, and therefore taking up a gender-as-difference perspective (Commeyras et al., 1996). Blair and Sanford (2004) began their piece by positing that masculinity is fluid, and how boys were in the traditional instruction of the classroom is not necessarily how they were in other spaces, which was consistent in theories of identity that emphasize fluidity. However, though Blair and Sanford (2004) did attend to gender, they also dichotomized it in statements such as: “boys can read, but are selective
in what they read” (p. 459), and “we need to recognize the distinctly ‘boylike’ flavor of their lives, their humor and interest in action” (p. 459). Thus, while they framed gender as fluid and multifaceted (Moje & Luke, 2009), they also made statements that positioned boys as a monolithic group. This is the very danger that Commeyras et al. (1996) point to in their theoretical piece on gender and literacy, where taking up a gender-as-difference perspective has the very potential for “obscuring the ways in which gender itself is a constructed social practice” (p. 463). My perspective on identity construction would prompt me to probe more around how literacy and boys are connected in this piece, and the various and conflicting ways that the boys do select texts, communicate with one another, and utilize time and space outside of instruction to construct their own masculinities through literacy.

A significant difference between this study and my dissertation work is the focus on older students (sixth graders), which can be coupled with much of the literature that focuses on literacy and identity markers (in this case, gender) in predominantly older students. Underlying the focus on older children is the potential for furthering the assumption that students first learn to read, and then read to learn (Hernandez, 2011). This contradicts the findings of other literacy researchers who have worked with young children in classrooms (Comber, Thompson, & Wells, 2001; Dyson, 2003; Vasquez, 2007) as well as esteemed practitioners (Collins & Glover, 2015), who have argued that children make their own meaning and engage with text critically even before they are conventionally reading. By focusing on young students, I seek to extend the conversation around the fluidity of gender and literacy (Commeyras et. al, 1996) to very young learners, augmenting the work that has been done in this area with adolescents and adults.
This dissertation therefore merits a place in this body of literature, both in integrating space, literacy, and implications for identity as spatially constructed, as well as the emphasis on young children’s navigation of these elements within a non-classroom space.

**Literacy Coaches Working in Other Spaces**

While the literacies and identities of children have an established place in literacy scholarship, there is a dearth of literature on school librarians that considers their identities as spatially constructed. In this section, I have selected two studies featuring literacy coaches to explore more deeply in hopes of addressing the perspective of educators who are in other institutional spaces of instruction. In a study on literacy coaches, Rainville and Jones (2008) set up the purpose of their work by contending: “growing empirical research in the field of literacy coaching does not sufficiently explore the complexities that people in such positions must negotiate as they move from classroom to classroom, working with different teachers, students, and materials in each place” (p. 440). Like librarians, there’s also little empirical literature around the identities of literacy coaches. For librarians, there is literature exploring their responsibilities, whereas “how-to” books that describe “essential knowledge” of the field dominate the literature on literacy coaching (Rainville & Jones, 2008).

Rainville and Jones (2008) drew from a larger study on three literacy coaches and focuses, in this piece, on one coach named Kate. The study followed Kate in three contexts—a male colleague’s classroom, a fifth-grade study group, and a female friend’s classroom. Rainville and Jones (2008) traced Kate’s positioning of herself in the different contexts and through social interaction. Kate was defined (at the time of the study) as a white, middle-class mother of three, who taught Special Education, second grade, and
third grade before becoming a literacy coach. The school site, Muriel Avenue School, was a K-5 elementary school, in a fairly rural town. Most children attending Muriel Avenue School were native English speaking children, and approximately 88% of third grade students were proficient or above on state literacy assessments. Rainville and Jones (2008) used Gee’s (2005) conception of situated identities to understand how and why individuals shift the ways in which they perform their identity in different situations. Several years after Rainville and Jones (2008), Hunt and Handsfield (2013) argued for a clearer picture of how literacy coaches experience this position through spaces, relationships, conflict, and emotional responses. Hunt and Handsfield (2013) utilized small stories from their literacy coach participants to illuminate the inherent power struggles that came up when literacy coaches worked with teachers in their own spaces, coding the coaches’ reactions to the situations through words like “uncomfortable, insecure, and mad” (p. 67). Through these small stories, Hunt and Handsfield (2013) traced the context, interactions, and the various materials that the coaches worked with, offering a glimpse into the emotional responses of the coaches. Both studies, in fact, argued that identity positioning is constructed through conversation, which was laden with power, though this power shifted to different people at different times. For this reason, the spatial positioning of a literacy coach was a type of other space—it was not a traditional classroom, and was often a mix of informal and formal spaces.

Data collection occurred over four months, and methods included participant observations lasting 30 minutes or more, video-recorded observations, field notes, artifact collection, and two interviews with each literacy coach (Rainville & Jones, 2008). Multiple readings of the data were conducted, and coding categories were developed that
identified the type of interactions that Kate participated in. Gee’s (1999) discourse analysis method was also utilized, seeking to uncover power and positioning within the conversations. To conduct their study, Hunt and Handsfield (2013) utilized positioning theory, drawing distinctions between the idea of role and position, arguing that positions are interactional and recognize fluidity in contexts. The study took place in a large elementary district in a Midwest suburb. 93.6% of the student population in the district was white, with 50% low-income. The district had recently moved to implementing a workshop model for the teaching of literacy, including balanced literacy, job-embedded professional development, intervention programs, and accountability. This study included seven literacy coaches, with at least 15 years of teaching in the district. All seven were observed in the professional development meetings, and three were also individually interviewed.

Rainville and Jones (2008) illustrated that with the first teacher, her friend, Kate seamlessly shifted from a more informal, friendly attitude to taking on a professional identity, as someone with expertise. This was contrasted by Kate’s work with Mr. Blue, who openly disagreed with some of Kate’s suggestions, “ultimately telling her he would rather have her just complete the running records for him” (Rainville & Jones, 2008, p. 445). Because Mr. Blue positioned himself as someone with knowledge and power, Kate repositioned herself, which aligned with Gee’s (2000-2001) arguments that we define ourselves in relation to others. Mirroring the Rainville and Jones (2008) piece, as well as the body of theoretical literature on identity (Gee, 2000-2001; Moje & Luke, 2009), Hunt and Handsfield (2013) also demonstrated how fluid identities are—for instance, how a coach was with one teacher may not be how they were with another. Through their
framework, they argued for the need to “[push] researchers to observe the small, in-the-moment interactional moves that literacy coaches and teachers use as they work together” (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013, p. 53) in order to better understand the fluidity in identity across multiple times and spaces.

As both studies demonstrate, literacy coaching was complex work that “involves far more than having a knowledge base in how teaching and learning work in literacy classrooms with children and teachers” (Rainville & Jones, 2008, p. 447). Across these moments, their interactions with others worked to craft a particular identity, often one where they resisted being positioned as an expert, despite the nature of the role to do so (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013). Coaching was work that was laden with power, where coaches responded to varying contexts and individuals. Hunt and Handsfield (2013) explored power openly. Through the microanalytic lens of “small stories” (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013, p. 55), they aimed to disrupt the traditional narrative of the “role” of literacy coaches, which predominantly attends to responsibilities, tasks, and actions. Hunt and Handsfield (2013) explored these micro-narratives of their participants, arguing that the small stories could better illuminate the complexities of the experience and add richness to our understanding of these experiences. Similarly, a strength of Rainville and Jones’ (2008) work is that it is story-rich, in that thick description was used to support claims about Kate’s identity positioning, so much that there’s an emotional response and connection to Kate as the reader understands her confidence wane in specific spaces.

Rainville and Jones (2008) articulate a theoretical framework to attend to how power and positioning circulated in different ways and in different contexts that Kate found herself in, although the issues that arose between Kate and Mr. Blue could be
further analyzed from a gendered perspective, one that unpacks how expertise is positioned in relation to gender. For example, analyzing the shifts, contentions, and layered positionings (Moje & Luke, 2009) that Kate took up in the various spaces that she traversed could be further probed and expanded in this piece. How she positioned herself as having expertise, for example, is both in relation to the space but also in relation to the other people with whom she worked, such as Mr. Blue. Kate’s language patterns both promoted her own authority and expertise, while simultaneously deferred authority (Commeyras et al., 1996), depending on who she was with. Literacy coaches, therefore, are in unique positions as their spatial arrangements, and subsequent implications for identity, differ quite dramatically from those of other school staff. On the other hand, Hunt and Handsfield (2013) drew quite explicitly on the work of identity and positioning theorists such as Gee, Moje, and Luke, and others to theoretically ground their analysis. Because the field of literacy coaching is situated in literacy studies (and not the field of librarianship), there is much to be gleaned from their theoretical frameworks, as they have definitions of identity that do attend to the notion of identities as socially constructed. For this reason, this is a valuable body of literature to draw on that can offer a more nuanced perspective on identity studies undertaken in the library and with school librarians.

**Contextualizing Libraries and Librarianship**

School libraries, as we know them today in North America, are about a century old. As previously argued, they function in tandem with, and yet quite distinctly from, classroom spaces. The legacy of libraries has its own tradition, which will be the focus of
this next section. Just as conceptions of literacy in schools have evolved over time, so have the institutions of school libraries.

**Historical Context of Libraries**

Although libraries are thought to have originated as democratic institutions—Dressman (1998) described them as “literary gardens”—they actually originated as children’s reading rooms, meant to help young immigrant children assimilate to American life. Early in their history, school libraries largely “were compiled of books, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings on a specific subject matter, upon request” (Michie & Holton, 2005, p. 2), particularly in rural areas. As libraries gained prominence, texts were ordered hierarchically with the Dewey Decimal System, with popular fiction entering the school library space much later (Dressman, 1997). To this day, this organizational legacy of school libraries still remains, as does the feminization of the profession. The American Library Association (ALA) founded in 1876, for example, still retains the responsibility to prepare and certify school librarians. Libraries are often physically constructed in the center of universities and even elementary schools, a cornerstone of the larger school institution, of which information (and physical texts) flow in and out (Leander et al., 2010).

As Dressman (1997) explained, the purpose of the school library has always been connected to the larger school context, but the spaces have remained distinct. He stated, “the school librarian is ‘softer,’ and is focused not on the transmission of culture as knowledge but on the inculcation of ‘good taste’ in reading materials” (Dressman, 1997, p. 274). However, school libraries have not been free from the shifts in education
priorities and federal policy, seen clearly through the many iterations of standards for elementary school libraries.

School library standards first appeared in 1925, when the ALA and the National Education Association (NEA) prepared optional elementary school library standards, establishing a foundation for individual states to develop their own local library standards (Michie & Holton, 2005). By the 1950s, libraries gained more attention, with “funding for school libraries first [becoming] available through the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which was passed by Congress in response to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union during the previous year” (Michie & Holton, 2005, p. 2). This opportunity signaled a shift in national priority, and an ideological change in what role the library might play in educating young children. However, this certainly did not mean guaranteed funding for libraries, which played a secondary role to classroom instruction. The NDEA funding hit a roadblock, in large part because “some school administrators and librarians did not see libraries as having a primary instructional role, but rather as having a supportive role for principals and teachers” (Michie & Holton, 2005, p. 3). Much of this sentiment still remains true today, although library programs have become more uniform in their design. In 1960, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) set forth updated standards—the Standards for School Library Programs (Michie & Holton, 2005). Soon after, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided funding for library resources (books and instructional materials). As technology began to make its way into schools, libraries shifted to integrate digital literacies and media education. New standards (Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs) again entered the library space in 1988
An emphasis on using information became the focal point in school library discussions in the latter part of the 20th century and encouraging students to be independent researchers became a focal point of library education. AASL’s most recent iterations of standards, *Standards for 21st Century Learner* (2007) and *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (2009) positioned libraries as central spaces for students to experiment with new media. These shifts are not only significant, as they reflect larger changes in public education and the social context, but changing national priorities.

The more recent rise in technology and electronic communications, coupled with the integration of these concepts and skills into school standards dramatically shifted the field of librarianship. Luke and Kapitzke (1999) stated: “in the last decade, the ‘librarian’ was reinvented as an information manager, media specialist, resource consultant, knowledge navigator, virtual librarian and cybrarian” (p. 476). This conception shifted the library from a contained space (Leander et al., 2010) that houses books and information, to one where information flowed more freely and through multiple mediums. Luke and Kapitzke (1999), however, critiqued the *teaching* of information literacy as still within a linear, formulaic, skills-based cognitive science paradigm, especially as the library institution simultaneously became much more of a nebulous space. Furthermore, the increased accountability of the early 2000s altered literacy education entirely, with libraries playing a part of this. With increasing standards, assessments, and accountability measures shifting the landscape of elementary schools, “21st century” skills came to dominate the rhetoric around education. Consequently, formal expectations for school librarians began to rise as well, as evidenced by NCLB’s
“Improving Literacy through School Libraries” (LSL) program (Mardis, 2005). This altered the library space dramatically, as standards and expectations for library instruction began to narrow the literacies that could be privileged in these “literary gardens” (Dressman, 1998).

Just as NLS shifted the way that many literacy studies scholars approached the field, the changing information landscape and highly technological environment of 21st century schools also significantly redefined the role of libraries. For NLS scholars (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), this typically meant a focus on multimodality and the many ways to access and engage with text, while library science relied more heavily on concepts of “digital literacies” (Gainer, 2012). Many argued that traditional print literacies—the legacy of school libraries—“are not sufficient for students immersed in the mediascapes and infospheres of classrooms and libraries, homes, cafes and new civic spaces” (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999, p. 471). While digital literacies have been integrated into library science, these are still rooted in a linear, hierarchical model of teaching and learning (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999).

The Positioning of Librarians

While socially situated perspectives on literacy are often concerned with theories of identity and how identities are constructed through language and literacy (Moje & Luke, 2009) in various spaces, the librarianship discourse relies much more on theories of roles and professional duties. Before the year 2000, for instance, the literature on school librarians largely emphasized librarians as teachers, positioning the library as an instructional space that could further the work of the classroom. In fact, librarians were called everything from a teacher-librarian to a school library media specialist (Sunseri,
1994), pointing to the lack of coherence about the role of a librarian and the way in which this role has evolved over time. Drawing upon the approximately 12 studies that were conducted on the role of a school media specialist between 1969 and 1999, with only a few focused in elementary school libraries, Everhart (2000b) stated, “a day in the life of a school media specialist is varied, complex, and consequential” (Everhart, 2000b, p. 53). This mirrors the ambiguity and contention that still surrounds the role of a school librarian. As Everhart (2000b) demonstrated, there was a disconnect between what school librarians were tasked with doing and the scholarly research base. In other words, at this time, scholars seemed to know a lot about what librarians should be doing, but little about what they actually did.

For example, Walter (2008) presented a study investigating to what extent librarians identified as teachers. As Walter (2008) contended, the 1990s were a time when teacher identity became a focal point; however, librarian identity really hadn’t yet been explored. Making a convincing argument for the importance of studying teacher-librarian identity, he argued that being a librarian was much more than learning skills and procedures. Walter’s (2008) qualitative research methodology—a new way of studying school librarians at the time (which was previously done so through surveys)—looked toward the personal narratives of six focal librarians to better understand their experiences. He presented several findings, tracing themes around the importance of administrative support, the multiple demands on librarians, the lack of professional training for the role, and the impact of misperceptions on the participants (Walter, 2008). For example, while Walter (2008) did discuss the role that public perception has in constructing a librarian identity, this was not elaborated on beyond a discussion of
stereotypes and was not framed within a literacy studies context. As Moje and Luke (2009) remind us, while identities may appear stable, they are often conflicted and layered. For this reason, the definition of “identity” that Walter (2008) took up in these pieces has the potential to disregard the belief that identities are always in the making (Moje & Luke, 2009). A more nuanced perspective of identity might help take the analysis within this study beyond an identification of stereotypes. For example, focusing on how librarian identities may be conflicted, both resisting stereotypes while simultaneously taking them up, would add complexity to this work. In my work with Amanda and Deborah, I attended carefully to the multiple ways that they both engaged with the library space, and what this means for the various ways in which they constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed their professional identities.

In the age of information, teaching students how to access and synthesize information has become a key tenet of library instruction. School librarians, while still taking on an instructional role, have been expected to support student academic achievement as expectations for schools have increased. Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (2000) conducted a follow-up study to a longitudinal study published by Colorado State Library, where they focused on the roles of the library media specialist (LMS) and investigated the impact of school library media centers on student achievement. The findings “establish that the relationships between many facets of well-developed LM programs and academic achievement are positive and statistically significant” (p. 39). This mindset, set forth and continued from the standards movement, positioned the role of the school librarian as a support and extension of the instruction happening in classrooms. They did, however, acknowledge that this success depended on
the presence of a full-time, licensed library media specialist (LMS) and support staff. Although not the purpose of this particular piece, I argue that unpacking this statement of the need for a licensed library media specialist (LMS) furthers potentially stereotypical notions around where expertise is located. In taking an identity perspective to this work, I argue for the need to examine how labels, certificates, and other notions of gatekeeping Gee (2000-2001) might impact the identities of those who work in the library.

More broadly, Phillips (2014) presented a literature review looking at ten years of research on leadership, specifically within a Library Information Science (LIS) context. To do this, Phillips (2014) drew from a wide range of the literature on libraries, including schools, public libraries, law libraries, and international libraries, in an effort to come to a holistic definition of librarian leadership. Through reviewing the literature, Phillips (2014) pulled out the top cited leadership qualities, which were innovation, creativity, imagination, vision, and commitment. Ultimately, through synthesizing this literature on LIS leadership, Phillips (2014) found that while leadership was described as essential for libraries to adapt to change, school librarians were typically not seen as leaders, despite the leadership training that they may have received (Mardis, 2013).

In a similar piece, Johnston (2012) asserted that researchers and theorists alike were calling librarians to take on leadership roles as far as integrating technology into schools, hence the rise in the term “school library media specialist” in recent years. In 2009 for example, AASL reiterated that librarians should be technology integration leaders within their school. This, paired with the call for students to develop information literacies, conveyed clear expectations for librarians. Johnston (2012) presented a study of leadership within librarianship, although across multiple forms and settings. She
utilized a distributed leadership framework where leadership is shared, and multiple
stakeholders work together to support students. However, despite the literature calling for
this shift, most librarians receive little guidance in how this actually is done, and research
has left this area unattended. In framing her study, Johnston (2012) created a binary
where one was a leader, or one was not. While support from others in the context was
mentioned, for example, there was no mention of the fluidity in leadership. That is,
Johnston (2012) didn’t take up the fluid conception of expertise that Rainville and Jones
(2008) relied on, where expertise and leadership manifested differently in different spaces
and with different colleagues. I approach the reading of this study with an identity
framework that positions identities as shifting and non-linear (Moje & Luke, 2009),
which allows me to conceptualize leadership as a position that might be taken up
differently in different spaces, rather than something that one attains and subsequently
maintains.

Church (2008) argued that the term of school library media specialist emphasizes
changing literacies, as well as a more nuanced type of learning and preparation for the
field. School library media specialists, for example, who receive their preparation and
certification from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and
AASL-recognized programs must demonstrate their content knowledge of informational
literacy, as well as their skills in integrating these competencies into library curricula. As
a result, the library media specialist of today is expected to take on a more instructional
role in the teaching of information literacy to students, as well be an expert and partner
for teachers (Church, 2008). However, Church (2008) contended: “although standards
and best practice demonstrate that library media specialists should play an active role in
curriculum and instruction in the school, principals are typically not aware of the instructional potential of the library media specialist” (p. 2). Principals, she found, typically think about the librarian in a more traditional sense, as someone who organizes materials—“manages the circulation of the library” (Church, 2008, p. 11)—and who also serves as an information resource for students and teachers. This pointed to a divergence in the fields of librarianship and instruction, as well as the need for more research into how school librarians construct their own professional identities. By framing librarianship within descriptions of tasks and roles, opportunities for looking at their complex and varied work is limited, as does the potential for viewing librarians as having agency in constructing spaces for multiple literacies in the library. Therefore, there is richness in bringing a lens of identity to the literature on librarianship, which can complicate a definition of identity as synonymous with roles, titles, and responsibilities.

The Identities of School Librarians

Because literature on the identities of school librarians, from a socially situated literacy perspective, has a limited presence in the field of librarianship, in this final section I review two bodies of literature that begin to bring these concepts together while positioning the library as a site for identity construction. A literacy scholar, Dressman (1997, 1998) employed both spatial and identity theory to examine how librarians constructed identities around “taste,” while Kimmel (2011, 2012) began to theorize librarian identity within the field of librarianship.
Identity Construction in the Library

Mark Dressman’s work is highly relevant to my own, for the way that librarianship is addressed through an identity lens, uncharacteristic of the literature in library academic journals (this piece is in an early childhood journal). Dressman (1997) argued that school libraries have been neglected in the educational literature, and he offers two pieces (1997, 1998). The first is an empirical study, and the second a theoretical paper, although both pieces draw on a large, comparative study that he conducted across three school libraries with very different populations and degrees of library programs. First, Dressman (1997) focused on the “story the librarian tells,” linking literacy in the library to the librarian herself. I built on his framing around identity to also offer ways in which this particular study can be considered spatially. In the theoretical paper, Dressman (1998) wrote about the library as a unique “other space,” a space that was public within the school, but wasn’t public beyond the school. Dressman (1998) drew primarily on Foucault, but also Soja (1996) to conceptualize the library as an “other space,” one that was free from the accountability of classrooms and offered a unique space for students to engage in literacy and assert their own agency in these practices. Likening school libraries to “literary gardens” (Dressman, 1998), there was knowledge available and organized for the perusal of children, and yet the children were given the space to exercise agency and “command of space” (Zacher, 2009), much like in a literal garden. Opportunities for students to explore diverse texts, therefore, were numerous in the library, although the opportunities may not be capitalized on.

This particular body of work began as a dissertation, where Dressman (1997) set out to conduct an ethnographic study of three librarians in a major southwestern city in
the United States. In each library, Dressman (1997) selected a third-grade focal class. Dressman (1997) argued that the librarians had discursive channels through which they “socialized” student readers (p. 276), one of the channels being social class. The discourse of “taste preferences,” he argued, was highly classed. For the upper-middle-class school, the “taste preferences” of the librarian and the students were much closer than at the working-class schools. The first school library that Dressman (1997) examined was Crest Hill, a neighborhood school comprised of mostly white students whose literacy skills met or exceeded grade-level expectations. Crest Hill had the same librarian for 20 years—she ran no established program, but instead, the hallmark events were “storytime” or “book talks.” The librarian, Barbara Henry, asked literature-based questions, where “the course of the conversation was extremely linear and aimed toward a clear, conventional interpretation of the story” (p. 281). This resonated with Heath’s (1982) findings that middle-class home story practices more closely mirror the expectations of literacy behaviors in the school. The success of students was, in part, contributed to the parents and students using a shared way of constructing their world through language.

Chavez Elementary, the second library site, was an old residential area between train tracks and a river, comprised primarily of a working-class community of Mexican American immigrants. Due to low test scores, most students were drilled on tests in their classrooms. The librarian, Mary Strauss, constructed a proactive curriculum to counteract the test-driven environment. Most prominent, her “Author Fan Club” was a read-for-pay program, where students earned prizes for reading certain amounts of books by one
author (on their level). Mary told a story of upwards mobility, “bootstrapping” her way into the middle class by acquiring a “taste” for the right books.

Roosevelt, the third site, was a new school of mostly working class, Mexican American students, but also had white and African American students. Louise Currie, the librarian, claimed that the home lives of her students were “just empty” and the library was made to resemble a middle-class living room. Dressman (1997) argued that the décor, the incessant labeling, and direct instruction may have been Louise Currie’s way of providing working-class students with access to the dominant culture, which was also discussed by Delpit (2006) as access to the culture of power. His critique—and one that I share—was that Louise had a simplified view of the complexity of language, relying on autonomous notions of literacy acquisition and focused on acculturating students to “proper” text consumption. She believed literacy could be transmitted directly to students (Street, 2005), not understanding that what message is “sent” will not always be the same as it is “received.” This was an essential component of Dressman’s (1997) analysis, where he studied the literacy practices within the library but through the lens of understanding the librarian as someone actively constructing that environment as a result of their own identity.

Dressman (1997), keeping with his belief that you can’t separate the librarian’s literacy practices from their own experiences, also was forthcoming about his own experiences in and with libraries from childhood to adulthood. This was in line with Peshkin (2000), who argued that it is imperative “to show the way a researcher’s self, or identity in a situation, intertwines with his or her understanding of the object of the investigation” (p. 5), as we bring ourselves to our work. Although Dressman (1997)
stated that he conducted interviews with each school librarian, the details of these interviews are unclear. Because Dressman (1997) was invested both in the way how the space of the library is engaged with, as well as implications for the identities of the librarian and students, understanding the ways in which he probed the librarian identity, and the extent of his observations over varying times and spaces (Sheehy, 2010), would bring both trustworthiness to the study, as well as a greater understanding of how his conclusions were drawn. For example, attending to how students and the librarians entered and exited the space, and reflecting on the uniqueness of the space in their larger school institution, would bring the reader of the study to a greater understanding of the nuance and complexity of each library space, as they were contrasted with one another. This is why reflective researcher memos (Maxwell, 2005) are essential to my data collection and analysis.

The library is a more public place than a traditional classroom, where students may have greater mobility, and yet less frequent access. For this reason, the library is a highly unique space in the school, and one that can be explored through a spatial lens while still rooted in the tenets of identity studies. A key tenet of spatial theory is that space involves culture, social interactions, and the passage of time, which converges and intersects in complex ways. This fits with spatial scholars, like Soja (1996), who argue that space isn’t objective, but is rooted in the social, cultural, historical, and political. In fact, “whereas space was once thought of as empty, available, and waiting to be filled up, recent theorizing about space has brought to light that space is a product and process of socially dynamic relations” (Leander & Sheehy, 2004, p. 1). Just as we come to understand words in relation to others, so do we come to understand spaces in relation to
other spaces. Dressman (1998) advocated for the library to remain as an “other space,” one that didn’t take the form of the classroom. This fits with Amanda’s assertions that the library should offer opportunities for leisurely reading and time for creative exploration, which she believed had been taken out of the classroom. Students, for example, spent much less time in the library, and the way in which the time was spent diverged from the classroom—which had a completely different history, set of norms, and standards with which to comply. Libraries were, in fact, never intended to be standardized classrooms, and while much of the literature (Uecker et al., 2014) calls for libraries to be seen as an extension of the classroom in a standards-based era, Dressman (1998) argued that this has consequences. Rather than positioning libraries as spaces that were “subservient or complementary to standard curricular objectives, and in particular to the objectives of literacy programs” (Dressman, 1998, p. 281), he advocated for the possibilities of these “other spaces” for the inclusion of other types of literacies.

Privileged students, who belong to the culture of power, often find that the discourses between their homes and schools reflect each other closely (Heath, 1982), allowing them fluid mobility between the two spaces. Leander et al. (2010) position spaces as inextricably connected, from a nexus-like perspective, rather than as discrete containers, bound by geographic borders. For the students at Crest Hills, their home and school literacy practices mirrored each other. This was a less visible transition than for the students at Roosevelt, who crossed from their home lives into a library that literally resembled a middle-class living room. Moje (2004), in her work with urban youth, has said: “the multiple spaces of their lives conjured up or enabled multiple ways of being… multiple tools for enacting those ways of being, and ultimately, multiple identities to be
enacted” (in Leander & Sheehy, 2004, p. 30). At Crest Hills, knowledge flowed in and out of the library, and between librarian and student with ease. For the students at Roosevelt, the knowledge valued by the librarian was a particular kind of knowledge; one that Louise Currie believed could be transmitted to the students, not realizing that “literacy practices cannot be quarantined from the ‘real world’” (Leander & Sheehy, p. 39). Student identities at Roosevelt, therefore, were shaped by (and helped to shape) the particular values within the space as they traversed it. Dressman (1998) contended that, across the three library sites, the students exercised their agency very differently but they did nonetheless, often subverting notions of what they were supposed to read or visiting the library when the librarian was at lunch so that they could access the books that they wanted. In both studies, then, the adults had to “acquiesce to those readers’ desires” at a certain point (Dressman, 1998, p. 283). This pointed to the significance of these “other spaces” for students to explore with literacy and use both literacy practices as well as the space to engage in experiences that were meaningful for them, or perhaps to escape from experiences that they didn’t find relevant or meaningful. I argue that employing a spatial theory can add a more multi-dimensional perspective to identity studies, by considering the ways in which space both reflects the identities that enter it, as well as constructs the identities therein.

**School Librarians as Collaborators**

Intersecting and juxtaposed with Dressman’s (1997, 1998) body of work are pieces by Sue Kimmel, a library scholar and researcher. Although Kimmel’s (2011, 2012) body of work was primarily housed in library scholarship journals, she has called for more research into the identity work of school librarians and began to bring the
positioning of librarians together with theories of identity situated in the NLS field. The purpose of these studies was to illuminate the conceptions of school librarians that were most prominent in her site. Kimmel (2011, 2012) offered two articles, drawing on a larger ethnographic study that brought these concepts together. This offered a perspective on how school librarians have shifted to take on a more integral and collaborative position and bridge the gap between literacy scholarship and the identities of school librarians.

Kimmel (2011) opened this article by positioning collaboration between librarians and teachers as essential work and fruitful for both parties involved. There was, indeed, a plethora of literature calling for meaningful collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers, but this collaboration has been severely understudied. She thoughtfully pointed out that just because schools have implemented common planning time does not mean that effective collaboration was occurring. For example, Kimmel (2011) stated:

There have been few to no studies illuminating the actual work of collaboration or how language is used on site to enact collaboration between school librarians and teachers. Instead, much of the literature takes for granted that collaboration occurred if two or more people met and subsequently conducted an activity. (p. 2)

While we can learn from similar analysis in other disciplines like literacy coaching, there is reason to take it up within librarianship, particularly as the field continues to transform and the expectations on school librarians increase. Gee’s (2000-2001) identity framework and discourse analysis that Kimmel (2011) took up effectively foregrounds discourse, as she argued that identities are constructed through language. To investigate identity, Kimmel (2011) conducted a year-long ethnographic study of one school librarian, and a
team of three 2nd grade teachers. The school site was small, urban, and primarily served African-American students on free/reduced lunch. Each month, grade levels had two hours of planning time in the library. This small piece of the larger ethnographic study traced eight planning meetings, and all were audiotaped with verbatim transcriptions. The second piece (Kimmel, 2012) attended only to the interviews (one per teacher) and then a focus group. In the interviews, Kimmel (2012) used a semi-structured interview protocol, where she asked about the teachers’ experiences planning with the librarian (herself).

Kimmel (2012) believed firmly that it matters—in regards to collaboration—that the librarian was not in a supervisory position. While surely this is essential for attempting to neutralize power relations, identity scholars (Janks, 2009; Moje & Luke, 2009) would contend that this removal of power is impossible. Throughout the interviews, Kimmel (2012) found that when the teachers named the most important things that a librarian brings to planning, the teachers stated: content/material knowledge, legwork (ideas and resources), and support. Ultimately, it was the “stuff” coupled with the “having [the librarian] there” to navigate the stuff that mattered to the teachers. In addition, Kimmel (2011) found that the following school librarian archetypes emerged: “the specialist who provides release time for teachers; the school librarian as helper, resource provider, and instructional designer; and a stereotypical ‘shhhh librarian’ who is the ‘story lady’” (p. 9). Interestingly, these themes varied between participants. For example, one teacher, Dianna, was comfortable with the librarian acting as a specialist, and less as a co-teacher. Others expressed surprise at the ability of the school librarian to collaborate instructionally, though ultimately were more open to this role.
Kimmel (2011) clearly outlined the purpose of the first study, which was to “explore the various roles or identities of a school librarian as they shape and are shaped in collaboration with teachers” (p. 1), and she took up Gee’s (2000-2001) theory of identity to illuminate the discourses around the school librarian. Kimmel (2011) was transparent about her data analysis—detailing the three phases, and the exact page numbers of transcription that were analyzed. She utilized thick description, quotes from all of the participants (including herself), and provided context about the topic of discussion at hand to bring the reader along. However, the second piece (Kimmel, 2012) did not include observations. Observations would augment her findings around language and identity, as it related to collaboration, by adding complexity. How one speaks, for instance, may differ from how one acts. Observing how the teachers decided to take up, or not to take up, the knowledge and resources generated in the collaborative sessions, would help to illuminate the layers in their own identities, which may be conflicting. I take the stance that interviews alone may not have the capacity to reveal the tensions in the very, very complex work of educating children, and have opted to include both methods in my own proposed work.

The librarian in this study was Kimmel (2011) herself, and she therefore was a participant at all levels of data collection and analysis. However, no mention of Kimmel’s (2011) own identity, as a researcher and school librarian who works daily with the school staff, was mentioned. For example, interviewing was introduced, but it was not made explicit who did the interviewing. As the researcher, we are led to assume that Kimmel (2011) herself conducted the interviews. In the field of literacy studies, a widespread notion is taken up that research cannot be separated from the researcher (Henstrand,
A component of strong qualitative research is examining—continually—the role of the researcher (Peshkin, 1988) and to bring greater complexity to this study, an explication of researcher role, as well as discussing how it impacted the study, is needed. In the second piece, Kimmel (2012) provided much more elaboration on her own role and subjectivities throughout the research process. However, power was left unexamined in this study as a component of her subjectivities. Power is always implicated in language and literacy (Delpit, 2006; Freire, 1983; Janks, 2009). The collaborative sessions that Kimmel (2012) engaged in, then, were not free from these power dynamics whether they were interrogated or not. For a more complete picture, Kimmel (2011; 2012) might expand her analysis to complicate how the identity of her participants, and herself, was constructed through social interactions and relations of power (Moje & Luke, 2009). Ultimately, Kimmel’s (2011; 2012) work has added tremendously to the literature on school librarians, and in particular, how their professional identities were constructed.

Conclusion

While the variance of the librarian role is significant, little is known about the professional identity of librarians, whether told in their own voices and/or chronicled through scholarly research. More than ever before, school librarians are shifting to school media specialists, library and information science specialists, teacher-librarians, and many other positionings. The push to integrate digital literacies also appears with force. Another discourse surrounding school librarians, however, emerges as Hunsinger (2015), an award-winning charter school librarian, positions librarians as “equity warriors,” working to close “word gaps” and the “digital divide” in high-poverty areas. There is a
problematic disconnect between what librarians are tasked with, and the dearth of literature exploring the diversity of their actual experiences, particularly when they called to take on more significant instructional and accountability-assuming positions (Uecker et al., 2014). Those studies that do explore the experiences of librarians remain limited to static notions of roles, tasks, and responsibilities, and frame the library as a physical place within a school. Therefore, conducting this literature review has posed challenges in bringing together very distinct paradigms on literacy, identity, and space.

To add to the existing bodies of literature (within literacy studies and library science), I draw from spatial theory, integrating tenets of identity studies, to better understand the ways in which school librarians construct their own social identities in the spaces that they traverse, analyzing the literacies that circulate in the library from a more particular framework. In doing so, I complicate the ways in which identity is defined in librarianship literature as one-dimensional, linear, and static, and how libraries are positioned as containers (Leander et al., 2010). In opening up the definition of literacy beyond activities such as reading, checking out books, and other related tasks, there is an opportunity to think more deeply about how students and librarians experience the complex space of the library.
A case study aims to explore “the messy complexity of human experience” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3) through looking at a small unit of social space for an extended period of time. In this dissertation, I studied an elementary school library to see which social spaces are produced. However, to re-conceptualize the library as a unique space, outside of accountability and yet still within schools, where multiple student identities might be considered literate (Campano & Damico, 2007), I first explored what literacy practices were already circulating in and through the space. To do so, I used ethnographic methods for the purpose of coming to understand the socially situated literacy practices that Amanda and Deborah, and four first-grade focal students, engaged with in the library over the course of a semester. Beginning at the start of a new school year provided an opportunity to explore how Amanda initially constructed the space for learning, and the ways in which she, and her students, interacted with the space and each other over the subsequent weeks. Over the course of this study, I then transitioned to working with Deborah as the school librarian.

I approached this case study with a spatial framework, while taking up tenets of identity, situating this within larger conceptions of literacy as socially situated and contextual. The purpose of this case study was to examine this library as one such other space, a “social unit” that was complex (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 38). Through a spatial theoretical lens, I approached all literacy activities as tied to the ways in which the
students and the librarians interacted with the space. By foregrounding this theoretical framework, I employed “thick” description (Henstrand, 2006) of events that were documentable, as well as considered the more abstract components of space that are difficult to document and yet are inherently present through spatial mapping tools. For example, as Sheehy (2010) reminds us, there are multiple dimensions of space, and understanding space as something that is constructed is a cornerstone of this proposed work. Additionally, I used notions of identities as fluid and multiple to complicate the existing literature on librarian identities, which often center on roles and responsibility (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000; Johnston, 2012). Because I contend that identities are much more complex than this existing literature offers, and understanding the complexity of librarian identities has the potential to shift the way we view library spaces and the role of libraries in educating children, I threaded tenets of identity throughout the entirety of my work and recognized the ways in which it was embedded in spatial theory. For this reason, my work did not seek to intervene or fix students, as this served to position student identities, and the contexts in which they occur, as bounded (Wissman et al., 2015). Instead, I followed Wissman et al. (2015), who advocate for more fluid research methods, as well as a broader notion of what might constitute a research context.

Therefore, while case study methodology gave me a solid framework to examine a unique and understudied space, I acknowledged the need to think beyond one bound case. In particular, spatial theory helped me to work against positioning the library as a container that was bound by four walls. Rather, I extended my observations outside—into the halls, through transitions, to ultimately disrupt the boundaries of my case. How
students prepared for their library time, for example, revealed the ways in which their literacy practices overlapped or diverged from those that they use in other spaces. Additionally, I conducted an observation within each of the first-grade classrooms to consider the differences across the spaces, and how students took up similar or different identity practices in their regular literacy instruction. The library space extended into other spaces, just as the classroom space extended into the library.

Conducting qualitative research, such as a case study, inherently means that “our researching selves are essential within the case” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 56). In fact, the very doing of qualitative research entails the researcher’s presence in the work, and therefore, is never neutral. Similarly, Erickson (1977) has argued that what is essential about qualitative research is that “its primary concern is with deciding what makes sense to count” (p. 58). In embarking on this type of research, I did not aim for neutrality, nor did I propose that neutrality was possible or even desirable. Additionally, this study was deeply situated within one particular context, and did not lead to universal claims about what sorts of materials or pedagogy should occur in all libraries to improve student achievement. There is no space that is like any other, no child like any other. However, the findings presented in this dissertation do have implications for the potential of other spaces for inclusive literacy practices. For as Henstrand (2006) describes: “As both a student and teacher of literature, I had been schooled in the idea that no reality is the same for all people; the only reality I can claim is that of my own personal interpretation” (p. 14). Therefore, this work provides a detailed, complex, and nuanced account of my interpretation of one library space. In doing so, I demonstrate the possibilities that might
occur in the library, as a space where both the school librarians, and four focal students, made sense of themselves as readers, writers, learners, and human beings.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the ways in which a school library is produced in one urban elementary school?

2. How do two school librarians, and four first-grade focal students, create spaces for literacy in the library, and what is the nature of those spaces?

**Overview of Research Design**

Because I embarked on this study with interest and passion for this research site, I learned quickly that my analysis had already commenced (Horvat, 2013), in that my knowledge of the school was driving my project and it was precisely this knowledge that opened up the space for me to pursue these inquiries. For example, I was already familiar with *some of* the literacy events that occurred in this dissertation site even before data collection began, as well as the flow of a typical session (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), though there is still much to learn. Qualitative research, where I studied the literacy, identity, and spatial experiences of my participants, best suited these inquiries, because as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert: “humans are storytelling organisms, who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). Investigating how my participants narrated their experiences in the library and with literacy was one way to begin to understand the various and conflicted identities that they brought to the space. Although I did have a prior relationship with Amanda, and was familiar with this school library, the
space was constantly shifting, as Amanda shifted within it, complicated by the addition of Deborah. This greatly altered the space and the literacies that “counted” in the space for the students that both Amanda and Deborah taught. For this reason, this particular site had a rich amount of information to offer as I grappled with how scholars and practitioners might come to value literacies in other school spaces.

As a case study researcher, I was particularly interested “in how children, teachers, and other educational participants experience the world around them” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 19). To understand this, I chose a small, yet complex, social unit to study in-depth using ethnographic methods, which included “watching” the social performance of participants, and “asking” them about their knowledge and experience (Erickson, 1977). A case study is one interpretation of a particular phenomenon, occurring in a particular context, and with particular participants. My case study, therefore, was designed to include a participant with whom I had a relationship with, and to be conducted within a school in which I had personal and professional ties. However, because research does not always go according to plan, Amanda soon shifted out of the library space, which will be described in more detail in the section that follows.

Furthermore, case studies do not provide generalizable knowledge, and they don’t aim to provide quick or easy fixes to educational problems (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

The nature of studying a complex case, then, often required multiple methods of data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To collect data during this case study, I utilized observations, semi-structured interviews, and artifact analysis as my methods. During observations, I attended to how the space was arranged, which parts of the space the children used, and the ways in which they used those spaces. Tracing the rhythms of
space and time (Sheehy, 2009) of the instruction in the library during these observations
provided a method for me to concretize the ways in which the students and librarian
engaged in literacy during specific activities. Therefore, I approached the library not as a
static container, but as positioned within a “nexus of relations” (Leander et al., 2010, p.
336) to other spaces in the school. Therefore, I attended to how individuals entered and
exited the space, understanding that they bring their own identities to the space and that
this produced tensions, depending on how their multiple identity markers were read
within the space.

To augment my observations, I conducted semi-structured interviews for the
purpose of probing further into the literacy practices and identity construction that
Amanda, Deborah, and four focal students took up in the library space, and how the
library space influenced those practices. These interviews were semi-structured, as I was
not looking for “specific” answers or any particular data. My protocols were meant to
prompt reflection but were designed to be fluid, just as identities are fluid. Finally, I
gathered artifacts that were relevant to my study site (Ghiso, 2015), such as schedules,
standards, and other logistical information that was posted around the room. Additionally,
I collected examples of student work that was created in the library site. Some of these
examples were finished pieces, while others were components of ongoing projects.

**Research Site**

Situated in a historically African-American neighborhood, the context for this
study was highly diverse. Approximately 40% of the students across the school were
African-American, 22% and 25% were Hispanic and white, respectively, with under 10%
Asian. Just over 40% of students qualified for free lunch (Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, 2016).

**Contextualizing the School**

City Partnership School began in 2011, as a joint endeavor between the local school system and a neighboring college of education. City Partnership School was designed as a community school and offered enrichment and comprehensive services in efforts to address child development in a holistic manner (Luter, Lester, & Kronick, 2013). City Partnership School was a lottery school, meaning that parents must apply, but it was non-selective. Because it gave priority to certain districts, it did aim to maintain an ethos of being a neighborhood school while educating for a global society. Additionally, the school offered multiple enrichment and wrap-around services, aiming to educate the whole child and serve the community, aligning with the mission of community schools (Luter et al., 2013). Part of City Partnership School’s mission was to provide a rich and inclusive community that celebrated its diversity, a clear value of the school. Teachers communicated with families frequently and strove to construct curriculum that was multicultural and inclusive in its orientation by inviting family members to share experiences, offering diverse text selections to students, and utilizing the resources in the community to provide a range of experiences and information for students. For example, students attended multiple field trips per year, often for enrichment in the arts, sciences, music, and math. Additionally, the urban neighborhood in which City Partnership School was situated had many children’s book authors and illustrators, and efforts were made to integrate these locally authored texts into the curriculum and library collection.
City Partnership School exemplified racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic class diversity. This was by design, as efforts to integrate students across racial and social class lines aligned both ideologically with the mission and vision of City Partnership School and its partnering university, and is also supported by research indicating that there are benefits to integration for both low and middle-class students (Kahlenberg, 2001). In particular, there is evidence that apart from family socioeconomic status, the socioeconomic status of school peers was the most significant factor in the academic achievement of low-income students (Schwartz, 2010). Many languages were spoken at City Partnership School, many traditions were celebrated, and many students were first or second-generation immigrants from countries such as the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

The literacy curriculum that City Partnership School employed had its roots in balanced literacy, which integrates phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension through a variety of formats and literacy activities (Calkins, 2000). The primary teachers at City Partnership School utilized interactive read-alouds, shared text, word study, minilessons, independent reading, guided reading, and small-group conferring formats to teach literacy in the workshop style format (Calkins, 2000). Professional development for teachers was a priority of the school and drew from its university partnership to do so. Teachers had monthly meetings with literacy coaches, math coaches, science experts, and graduate students specializing in a variety of other content areas. Additionally, teachers had opportunities to lead professional development meetings for the staff and were encouraged to attend off-campus sessions as well. Amanda, as the full-time school librarian, also had opportunities
to attend professional development conferences and workshops, most recently one about teaching history through children’s literature.

**Contextualizing the Library**

The library at City Partnership School was situated on the top floor of a four-story building. Amanda taught each grade level in the library two to three times per week, depending on the alternating schedule. As the school librarian, she had library standards in which she was expected to follow, set forth by the school system which were aligned to the Common Core State Standards, but otherwise had freedom in how to address these standards. Because of this flexibility, Amanda wanted to use this opportunity to integrate inquiry and project-based learning opportunities into the school library. In fact, she framed her role around enriching and supporting the literacy work occurring in the classrooms. Because Amanda was a veteran classroom teacher, she was eager to use this new role to advance her own knowledge around literacy, texts, and instruction. However, Amanda also positioned her role as diverging from the classroom in significant ways. When I asked her about the role of literacy in the library, she stated: “Making it aside from academic reading… I mean, that’s what I’d like my role to be.” In another example, Amanda elaborated more: “Well, there’s no free, free reading in school. You know, there really isn’t.” Amanda’s purpose, therefore, as the school librarian, was to open the space for students to engage with texts creatively in a culture of education where she deemed it lost, and to encourage this enjoyment of reading that she believed as both essential and often pushed out of the classroom space. It was this tension that both excited Amanda, while simultaneously worried her. This contention in both the library space, and her position therein, is what initially drew me to this work.
Participants

As already discussed, Amanda was a veteran classroom teacher in the urban school system in which City Partnership School is located. A long-time native of the tri-state area, Amanda was of Latina descent and was bilingual. Because of her racial and linguistic markers, Amanda was afforded some “insider” status with the community served by City Partnership School, much of which was also bilingual. Additionally, Amanda had relationships with many of the staff at City Partnership School and could often be heard speaking in Spanish with the administrative staff in the office before school began.

When City Partnership School first opened, Amanda became a founding teacher with the principal at the time. Then, she transitioned to the school librarian. Amanda’s curricular flexibility increased with her transition from a classroom teacher to the school librarian, and so did her desire to use the library to engage students in thematic, inquiry-based teaching. When Amanda took on the role of the school librarian, she and I had several conversations about what inquiry and project-based learning might look like in the library. I offered to collaborate with Amanda, and she graciously opened her space and her thoughts to my pilot research. The more time that I spent with her, and in the library, the more invested and interested in this work I became. The instructional and curricular flexibility that Amanda now felt, without a formal curriculum and no real constraints from the administration, allowed her to consider what the library could offer to her students, and the different spaces for literacies that it might make room for. Amanda had a clear investment in creating the space within the library for all students to
identify as literate (Campano & Damico, 2007) and to experience the space in a positive manner, even when it is difficult, which is why I was so drawn to embarking on this study with her.

For example, during my pilot study, I conducted multiple interviews with Amanda to probe what she viewed as her purpose in the library, and what her beliefs were about literacy, libraries, and teaching. Because she often discussed the library in relation to the classroom, as a space that could be designed to counteract the standards-based and (often) scripted activities, this theme remained prominent throughout the interviews. Although Amanda did express uncertainty about her formal role as the librarian with, “As the first year in here, I’m thinking that’s what it should be…” she did have strong notions about what the literacy program should look like:

You know, recreational [reading] shouldn’t be, ‘I’m an E… I’m going to read E books’ or ‘I’m an A, I’m going to read A books for pleasure’ because A books are not pleasurable. You know? It should be, you know, take home read-alouds and have [my] mom read me books and let me act them out and let me… enjoy this book even if I can’t read every word. (11/16/2015 INT, p. 1)

Amanda defined literacy in a way that varies from other spaces in the school, and is constructed through her experiences (most notably, as a veteran classroom teacher). She described being excited that for the first time in her career, there was no teacher’s guide, despite being left to “figure it out.” It is only through deep investigation into her talk, beliefs, hopes, and frustrations that this more nuanced depiction of the library emerged and the complex tensions that Amanda negotiated in creating inclusive spaces while in a new and unfamiliar space (Ellsworth, 2005).

To my disappointment, however, Amanda’s time in the library was short-lived. During the third week of my data collection, a new teacher at City Partnership School had
quit, and Amanda was asked to take her place in the library. She did so, for the second
time, as she had also filled a maternity leave replacement role for several months during
the year prior. Immediately after her transition from the library to the classroom, I
interviewed Amanda about this shift, to which she responded:

I’m torn with that because how I feel is that it’s just saying, well anybody can
go in there and do that. I don’t necessarily think that that’s how the principal feels
per say. I feel like she was really excited about putting somebody full-time into
the library. We had a part-time person before me. I feel that in her head she thinks
it’s an important place and it’s like the center of the school, but at the same time, I
feel conflicted about it because it’s the second time it’s happened to me.
Sometimes it’s like saying, “Yeah, so you’re great for the classroom,” which is a
compliment, I guess, but yeah, we’ll just stick a sub in the library. It’s tough to try
not to think that that’s what they think, but that’s how I feel sometimes, even
though I don’t necessarily think that they’re thinking that. If that makes any sense.
(9/29/2016 INT, p. 2)

As Amanda demonstrated here, there is a tension between her language that
positions the library as a space that is “the center of the school” and yet “well anybody
can go in there and do that.” As she shifted from the library to the general classroom, I
continued to be reminded of how emotional the work of teaching, learning, and research
is at all levels.

Amanda’s transition left the library in need of a school librarian. Deborah, a
frequent substitute at City Partnership School, transitioned into the role of the school
librarian, and remained in that position for the rest of the year. While I continued to
explore Amanda’s identity in the classroom space, Deborah also agreed to work with me
in the library, and over the course of my data collection, I came to know her as a partner
in this work.

In my conversations with Deborah, she spoke of her initial desire to teach home
economics while growing up in the Caribbean, before realizing how much she enjoyed
teaching younger students. An African-American woman of Caribbean descent, Deborah also discussed her strong religious faith. Deborah often wanted to guide the first-grade students to appropriate reading content, telling them that books about Freddy Kreuger were the “dark side of life” by being too violent (1/20/2017 FN, p. 4). As a teacher, Deborah viewed her role as supporting students’ emotional and moral development.

Early on in our work together, I asked Deborah about her feelings regarding being the librarian, to which she responded: “I think it gives me more flexibility to do certain things because okay, I read to them, they respond. Then the second time, I read to them… they browse to take a book out” (12/15/2016 INT, p. 3). Deborah spoke more about integrating holidays and projects in the library, such as writing about what students are thankful for around Thanksgiving, celebrating women’s history, or studying biographies during African American History Month. With the older students, Deborah explained that “I try to bring in what’s happening in the world to school because that’s how you are going to be living. You are not going to live in a box” (12/15/2016 INT, p. 7). With each assignment or activity that students engaged with, Deborah was sure to display what students produced in the library space.

While a temporary space, Deborah demonstrated the ways in which she made it her own. In discussing how much she enjoyed being in the library, she explained:

Yeah, I really like it up here, but then I know, I don’t know when they’re going to get the teacher still… so even though I don’t know, I’m working with the thought that they can tell me anytime and really, if they telling me anytime, I know I have done my best up to that time. (12/15/2016 INT, p. 10)

Although to Deborah the space was always in a sense temporary due to her position as a substitute in the school, her language (such as “they can tell me anytime,” and “I don’t
know when they’re going to get the teacher”) also revealed the ways in which the space was contingent for her, too.

In addition to studying that language and literacies that both Amanda and Deborah took up in the library, and the implications for their identities, I also included four first-grade focal students. This sampling is best described as purposeful and theoretical (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), guided by the theoretical framing of my inquiry and the specifics of this case. The students were critical to studying literacies, because inherent in my theoretical framework is the notion that identities are constructed socially (Gee, 2000-2001). Literacy, then, is how we name ourselves in the spaces that we are in, becoming a form of “identity kit” (Gee, 1989, p. 51). In order to understand the complexities within the social unit (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) of the school library, then, I investigated the literacy practices of multiple participants. I elected to include students that fall within diverse levels of literacy proficiency, as defined by their teachers and Amanda. In doing so, I interrogated the notion of varying levels of “success” to see what library might offer as a different space, an other space. Specifically, did they engage with literacy differently in the library than they did in the classroom?

The Focal Students: Mark, Nikki, Carla, and James

To select my focal students, I first spoke with the principal and the first-grade teachers at City Partnership School. The principal, in anticipating a positive response to solicitations for student participants, advised me to invite a small number of students to the study. In my desire to have a range of backgrounds and experiences, I asked each teacher to recommend three students that they thought might be willing to work with me: a reader who they considered to be struggling, a reader they considered to be at
benchmark, and an advanced reader. I requested that these students also be diverse in terms of their race, linguistic background, and gender. Six students were sent home with letters from me explaining the study, and four students returned signed permission slips. These four students (two in each first-grade class) became my focal students.

Mark was a male student of Hispanic descent, who was, at the time, a younger sibling to his third-grade brother. Mark’s family was of a lower socioeconomic background, and Mark spoke both Spanish and English at home. A highly social student who works very hard to achieve, Mark relayed to me the benefit of reading, which he stated was to “get more learning in your head” (11/10/2016 INT, p. 4), augmented by the additional transcript excerpt that follows.

Alyson: Mmm hmm. And, what does a good reader do in the library?
Mark: Reads a lot… And, and, they read hard books.
Alyson: Read hard books? What does that mean?
Mark: That means, you know, you know every book but you don’t know one book. So you have to read that book over and over.
Alyson: And, what happens if you read the hard book over and over? Mark: It will… And then you can get, you can get more learning in your head and you can get writing more done (11/10/2016 INT, pp. 3-4)

By his teachers, Mark was positioned as a low reader, or a struggling reader, in the sense that he was not meeting benchmark expectations in terms of his independent reading level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Despite this, Mark seemed to love reading. In the library, he traversed space with ease, selecting different books and often trading them in until he found one that he liked or was successful with. In this sense, Mark “browsed” in the truest sense of the word.

Despite this engagement and browsing, Mark often seemed constrained by his reading level, even though students were not directed to read at their levels in the library. As this dissertation will demonstrate, however, the discourses of assessment and reading
levels were powerful, and nonetheless shaped Mark’s choices in what to read, as well as his identity as a reader.

Nikki was a student in the same class as Mark. A female student of Chinese-American descent, and from a middle class and educated family, Nikki was positioned by her teachers as an advanced reader and seemed to be quite proud of her reading level. During a follow-up observation during May of 2016, she introduced me to her friend by saying “we’re the same level. We have so much in common. Our birthdays are both in February!” (5/15/2017 Map).

Being viewed as a proficient reader perhaps afforded Nikki certain mobilities in what to select to read, as well as what behaviors to take up (or not). For example, Nikki described that “I really like… I’m not really interested in books about princesses” (11/17/2016), distinguishing herself from her peers. Nikki also didn’t always conform to the schooled behaviors that were asked of students. For example, she often sat at the back of the rug and stretched out during read-alouds, and she rarely participated in class discussions. In an observation occurring during the classroom literacy block on November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2016 Nikki and her classmates were often directed to turn and talk with one another, yet Nikki did not talk with her assigned partner. She was also redirected to sit in her spot (11/22/2016 FN, p. 4). As I first got to know Nikki, I wondered if these behaviors went unregulated because of her high reading level. Was she afforded more leeway because she wasn’t in need of improvement?

In the second first-grade class, I came to know Carla. Carla talked to me about her family, and how her parents met while studying abroad in Spain. These statements were augmented by Carla’s other stories about traveling with her family over the summers; in
fact, a story called “All About Families” that she had written in class included an anecdote about a summer trip to the beach. A white, middle-class, female student, Carla reported loving school, and loving the library. During my first conversation with her, she mentioned that she really liked the library:

Alyson: So, Carla, you said that you really like the library. How do you feel when you come to the library?
Carla: I feel, like, excited.
Alyson: Why do you feel excited?
Carla: Because… because, I, I can’t wait till like maybe, I’ll find some new books that I haven’t read before. Or, or, I really want to get a book that, like, I really love.
Alyson: Mmm hmm. And when you leave the school library, when your library time is over, how do you feel then?
Carla: Uhh… I still feel happy, because, you know. (10/27/2016 INT, pp. 6-7)

Considered by her teachers to be a student who was reading at grade level, Carla read both independently and in partnership with her peers. She seemed to be at ease during both.

Finally, my last focal student was James, in the same class as Carla. James was a male student of African descent (both parents), where his mother was from Nigeria and his father was from Guinea. James described his father as speaking both English and French. James was described by his teachers as a reader who was advanced, in that he was reading above his reading level. Because of this, James told me that he was encouraged to read books at his level in the classroom, but that he enjoyed his visits to the library because he got to see Mo Willems books. In my first interview with James on November 3rd, 2016, where I asked him to take five pictures of anything in the library, all five of his images were of books, with three of the five being Mo Willems books.
Positionality: Who Am I in Relation to This Work?

Conducting research is a process of continual inquiry. My role as a researcher in my particular school site was complex because I wasn’t just studying the particular phenomena of my proposed dissertation study. While this was part of my inquiry, I was also discovering myself in the process. I was naming myself as a researcher.

My Legacy

My father, a fisheries biologist who engages in quantitative research, argues (sometimes with me) that research is factual, objective, and neutral. Although in the past I bought into this notion, I have since grown to take the opposite stance. This brings up the question that Lytle (2000) poses: What counts as research, and to whom? My father has been widely published and has surely made a significant contribution to the field of fisheries. While this matters, this is one particular kind of research that is situated within one particular paradigm. The notion of what counts as research then, between my father and I, becomes quite literally a “contested territory” (Lytle, 2000, p. 692).

I come from a legacy of traditional literature, of science. More distantly, I come from a legacy of activism, of law, of environmentalism. I come from a home that proudly collects texts of all shapes and sizes. The legacy I hail from is one where you pride yourself in your work. The amount of your salary doesn’t matter as much as passion and accomplishment. I come from a legacy of “you can be anything you want to be” with the caveat of “college is not optional.” In truth, then, could I really be anything I wanted to be? More specifically, could I be something that fell outside of the traditional four-year college degree, and professional career path? I knew the answer to this question, and so I
would never aspire to be an artist or musician. I would never aspire to be anything outside of the expected, college-bound route.

I come from a legacy of middle-class, white progressives who always vote Democrat, who advocate for sustainability, and who profess a belief in an inclusive society but simultaneously live in the comforts of middle-class suburbia and enjoy experiences such as vacations and eating global cuisine. Lam and Warriner (2012) describe ideology as constructed from particular social, economic, and political locations. The progressive ideology of my family, then, is highly classed and raced. My ideologies are highly classed and raced. This is how I have arrived at where I currently am—physically, intellectually, politically, and socially.

My father and I have competing ideologies about what counts as research, and this constructs a “contested territory” (Lytle, 2000, p. 692) between us. Excited to share updates with him about my ongoing work, I sent a small outline of my study and asked for his feedback. When I received his feedback—whose scholarship I had revered my entire life—I couldn’t decide whether I wanted to laugh or cry. My father questioned the contribution that my study would make to a larger body of academic knowledge. While my logic understood that there was little overlap in our fields of study and that this feedback was not particularly relevant for me, I still desperately craved my father’s approval. Here I was, an adult, who stayed up in the middle of the night crafting an email response that I thought would “convince” him that my study was justified. Despite knowing in my head that I was, I wanted to hear that he was proud of me. Needless to say, his feedback in that moment did not say those words.
For the first time in my life, I have begun to experience dissonance with my parents. As Kamler (2001) recounts in her own work, the process of pursuing doctoral work changes you. My doctoral work has changed me. I am no longer the “good girl” (Miller, 2005) who agrees with everything my parents say and do, privileging their opinions above all else as I have in the past. I speak my mind, I advocate for my work and myself, and this results in conversations (in this case, an email exchange) that are uncomfortable. The power dynamics within my legacy have shifted as I have shifted. As Janks (2009) contends: “we bring who we are and where we come from to the processes of production and reception of spoken, written, and visual texts” (p. 58). I brought myself, my changed self, to the email exchange, only to be met with resistance.

**My Researcher Self**

My legacy of seeking approval is not something that ends with my family, much as I wish that to be the case. I am constructed from my different legacies, just as I am deconstructed and reconstructed with each new position that I take up. In Moje and Luke’s (2009) metaphor of identity as position, multiple “laminations” that we take up construct our identity over time and across spaces. My identity, while not the “good girl” (Miller, 2005) that I once was, is full of contradictions. As wa Thiong’o (2012) asserts, “a reorganization of a space, the same space, can, at the minimum, bring about different results and different perspectives” (p. 8). Just as there is still dissonance between my father and I across spaces, there is also dissonance in my research site, which involves many layers of stakeholders, ideologies, and priorities in and across spaces.

My research site, City Partnership School, was complex for many reasons. The school sat at the nexus of the public school system, a college of education, and an
affiliated partnership office focused on improving the local schools through university partnership. This partnership office, importantly, funded my fellowship at the school site. With this partnership, I was the poster child for a fellow—the “good girl” (Miller, 2005) aiming to please. I came to the lunches when invited, I wrote thoughtful thank-you notes, and I prepared copies of and shared my materials when asked (even when I didn’t have the time). I did not say a negative word, and I always did as I was asked, even if it meant restructuring my day to fit something in. With this partnership office, I approached everything with rose-colored glasses, because I was “making a difference.” Just as I sought approval with my father, I sought it here as well. Of course, this relationship was laden with institutional power (Janks, 2009). Because this partnership office funded my work in City Partnership School, I must “consent to their relations” (Janks, 2009, p. 36)—I really didn’t have a choice in sharing my work or participating in additional events.

And yet, when I physically entered City Partnership School, I was positioned in another way. With the teachers, including my participant Amanda, I tried to position myself as an ally. While I did enter the site with academic power, I was not an outside person coming into the school community—I had my own history in this site. As a matter of fact, I was allowed to be in the site as a researcher because of the relationships and trust that I had gained over the past two years. Many teachers openly voiced their frustrations with the school culture to me, and I kept their frustrations in confidence. I helped in any way possible, which was often to be a sounding board and to validate their concerns. It was not long ago that I, too, was in the position of being a teacher and so I sympathized. Walking into these spaces, with these teachers, was a completely different
world than entering the partnership office where, again, I embodied the “good girl” (Miller, 2005) who did as she was asked.

However, although I desired to identify as an ally with the teachers, it was not that easy. I was a representative of the university in many ways, and this complicated the layered positions that I could take up. This was a label that I was continually aware of as I strengthened my relationships with the teachers, by making time to connect with them, and occasionally getting together outside of school. I have gone on field trips with teachers, both in relation to my curricular work but more importantly for connection with them and their students. Aligning myself with the teachers, however, was complex. The school administrator, the gatekeeper of the school, was someone that I needed on my side to continue my work in this site. As I dropped by her office to say hello, gave quick updates, I talked about progress, inquiry, and excitement. I sought her approval, her permission, to enter this space. Then, I went upstairs to see the teachers, and the discourse changed. Jamaica Kincaid (1988) writes about tourism in Antigua, about visiting other places and then returning to the ordinary comforts of home. While I did have relationships with the teachers in City Partnership School, I must acknowledge and examine how power was also tightly woven into this relationship when I moved in and out of their school space. I was not a full-time teacher at the school, after all. I made short visits for specific reasons—in other words, I was the form of a tourist that Kincaid (1988) speaks of. While several of the teachers kept me privy to the inner happenings of the school and did not attempt to mask their frustrations, I then left the space to return to the university setting. This positioned me in certain ways, as having the privilege to work across the boundaries of the academic and practitioner space and outside many of the
daily pressures that the teachers feel. So, while I worked to align myself with the teachers, I was not sure that I ever truly could, given the complex layers of power that I navigated between City Partnership School, the university, and the partnership office.

I was positioned—even within one building—in multiple ways during a short visit, depending on whom I was talking to and what particular space that I entered into. As Lytle (2000) contends, “the positioning or location of teachers as researchers interrupts the easy distinctions often made between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ and destabilizing the boundaries of research and practice” (Lytle, 2000, p. 699), and I found myself in this very in-between space, constantly sliding one way or the other on this continuum. I was a teacher advocate in one space, and then the “poster child” in another, where I suppressed these frustrations and put on a smile. I was both an insider and an outsider even within the same physical building. To navigate this in-between space, I kept confidences and I maintained connections in any way that I can.

*Who was I in relation to this work? What were my motivations?* These are complex questions. I was motivated to create these spaces for connection because I had relationships with teachers that I care about. However, I was also motivated to maintain those relationships so that I could do my dissertation work at City Partnership School. Finally, I was motivated to please the partnership office so that I continued to receive funding. My identity in this work was therefore a complex tapestry of my legacies, my multiple and contested positions, and the many ways in which I asserted myself (or did not assert myself) as I created spaces to connect with the people with whom I worked and cared for. My work was continuously a site of dissonance for me as I struggled to weave my past experiences with the complexity of my research site. This site was where
multiple and overlapping institutions met, and so it was a contact zone that I navigated at all times (Lytle, 2000) depending on who I was with and the nature of the work. Primary in this navigation was staying cognizant of the complexity of my work, and not taking for granted my relationships on both sides of the continuum. Given my legacy, one that has now become more complex than I knew it before, this in-between space began to feel normal, expected. I was no single way, and within each new context was a continual negotiation (Ghiso, 2015) of relationships, power, and the work at hand.

**Data Collection**

With my own researcher identity in mind, then, I embarked on a dissertation study that would inform my understanding of the library as a site for literacy practices and identity construction, understanding that my own identity was implicated by this work. To begin, Dyson and Genishi (2005) discuss the importance of starting a case study by getting a feel for the research site in which you are entering, while building trust and gaining access to a complex world, whether it be a classroom, community, or school library. Because I conducted my pilot study in this same site, I already had a context for the space. In reality, my previous experiences in this site were what brought me to my research questions. However, the beginning of every new school year changes and brings with it new groups of children. The experiences that I had in this space were not the experiences that I would continue to have, because space shifts and changes (Soja, 1996) as new individuals come in and out, new knowledge is gained, and new materials enter the space. Space is constructed through a series of social processes, and is positioned at
the nexus (Leander et al., 2010) of many other spaces in schools, all which are in flux. Therefore, embarking on this dissertation study was simultaneously familiar and new.

While I knew the teachers at City Partnership School, and I knew Amanda, I didn’t know the students as well, nor did I know Deborah. For that reason, I commenced my proposed study by immersing myself in the library with the students I worked with in order to contextualize the space and “attune myself to its rhythms” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 30). I also collected preliminary documents and information, such as the library schedules, school schedules, expectations, and standards. I additionally created documents such as my own sketches of the space, and the flow of the library sessions (structured as either “browsing” or “response” sessions). Although in the following sections I described my data collection methods in depth, it’s essential to keep in mind that “the straightforward quality of the prose belies the complex decision making” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 61). For this reason, my study remained flexible and modifications were made as the study unfolded.

**Participant Observation and Fieldnotes**

Humans are influenced by their settings, and the spaces in which they traverse, so I collected all data in this particular space. Observations served as the cornerstone of this case study. While in the research site, I took up the role of “observer as participant” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 143). While acting as the observer as participant, I engaged in the systematic noting of behaviors, events, and languages (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 139). Because I actively took up a spatial theoretical framing (Soja, 1996), I attended closely to the ways in which Amanda, Deborah, and their students utilized the space. Where in the space did they physically go? What did they *do* in the
small spaces that they created within the larger library space? How did they enter and exit the space? How were these “boundaries” blurred? I attended specifically to any literacy practices that seemed unexpected, and that seemed to disrupt the expected and narrowly defined definition of what a literate child is.

The First- and Secondspaces were relatively straightforward to trace during these observations, as they were the expected practices and discourses that were permitted and valued in the library space. However, I also examined the Thirdspace, which were the interruptions in the practices that are valued. These were utterances by a student, racialized seating arrangements, or other moments of discomfort (Sheehy, 2009) where the social space was destabilized. Although Ballenger (2009) does not use an explicit spatial framework, she similarly found that it was often in these “puzzling moments” that new discoveries about student engagements with literacy and identities were made. Observing how Amanda, Deborah, and my focal students interacted during these “puzzling moments” was something that I analyzed spatially by sketching and otherwise documenting embodied positioning, language, and use of materials (Leander, 2002). Where students choose to sit or stand, who they interacted with, and what materials they took up during their library time was significant for understanding the ways in which they exerted social agency in constructing the space. For example, when students were called to line up at the end of their library session, what did they do? Did they continue reading, or did they talk with their peers? At what point did they close their book? These instances pointed to the way that students read the library space and their own positioning within it. These observations were documented both in my fieldnotes, and (as discussed in the next section) also during interviews as they connected to patterns of discourse.
As Dyson and Genishi (2005) state, fieldnotes are the foundations of a case study, and qualitative research in general. I preferred to record fieldnotes by hand, as it allowed me to fluidly move around the space and was also less intrusive when interacting with young children. In these fieldnotes, I recorded the nature of the event, who was involved, and where and how long the events lasted (Corsaro, 1981). Through my observation and corresponding fieldnotes, I provided detailed, “thick” description (Henstrand, 2006) to better interpret the nuanced patterns in the language and actions of my participants. Additionally, I stayed mindful of identity as a performance (Gee, 2000-2001), and constructed through language, documenting both verbal and nonverbal events. Drawing on Geertz, I took up Henstrand’s (2006) conception of “thick” description, who argues that when taking fieldnotes:

I was always conscious of recording sufficient details to ensure that my writing would be rich with description. As I observed social situations or conducted interviews, I recorded words verbatim. When that was not possible, I recorded key phrases and returned to the text later on the same day to complete the dialogue and add description. (p. 14)

Of course, these were taken quickly while I was in the field and were in a rough state. Therefore, as soon as possible after leaving the site, I elaborated the hand-written notes into full fieldnotes, which I then used for analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 140). In other words, I turned my observations from the field into textual objects (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). These descriptions were essential to my case, for in theorizing around the Secondspace discourses and Thirdspace interruptions (Soja, 1996), I first needed an adequate documentation of Firstspace (Soja, 1996) talk and action.

While in the field, I took notes on a double-sided protocol. One side was used to note my low-inference observations, with the other used for my own interpretations while
in the moment. Additionally, I made every attempt to note emergent codes during the observations, which I revisited multiple times throughout the collection and analysis process. As Emerson et al. (2011) contend, there is not one right way to take fieldnotes. Fieldnotes are one person’s interpretations of what they have seen. Therefore, they are “one account made by a particular person to a specific other at a particular time and place for particular purposes” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 16). Assuming that there is one best way to document one account subsequently assumes that one interpretation is better than others. Although two researchers may witness the same event, they will likely remember, interpret, and thus document it uniquely. For this reason, I remained conscious of my own role in shaping the ethnographic data that I collected (Luttrell, 2000). These observations worked in tandem with the interviews, as they both contextualized what is said during an interview, while also offered an opportunity for me to reflect on what I might return to during the interviews.

**Participant Interviews**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) assert that the success of good qualitative research depends on “building trust, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitively considering ethical issues” (p. 118). For this reason, I did not take interviewing, in particular, lightly. In fact, Fontana and Frey (2005) contend that interviewing is “historically, politically, and contextually bound” (p. 115). Therefore, I didn’t seek neutrality, especially in the highly emotional interviews with Amanda after she transitioned to the role of a third-grade teacher. Because I was a visitor in this library space, I positioned Amanda, Deborah, and the children as experts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) in using the space and engaging with one another. In other words, I aimed to
foreground their experiences and knowledge. I conducted interviews in order to understand how Amanda, Deborah, and the small group of focal students, experienced and utilized literacy in the library space, and what implications these literacies had for their identities as literate beings. Both what was said, and what was communicated nonverbally, was essential to collect during the interviews.

I conducted three semi-structured interviews (approximately 40-45 minutes in duration as per the library schedule) with Amanda, two semi-structured interviews with Deborah, and four semi-structured interviews (approximately 20 minutes in duration) with each of my focal students. The first interview, however, began with Amanda conducting a tour of the library. As she introduced the space to me, she also conveyed her experiences, ideologies, and beliefs about the space. This method of interviewing was a way to see how Amanda narrated her space. Just as with the library tour, it was essential that the rest of the interviews remained semi-structured, because I was not looking for “specific” answers or needing to find any particular data. My protocols were meant to prompt reflection but were designed to be fluid (just as identities are fluid). I designed interview protocols according to Spradley’s (1979) framework, which included both broad questions and moves to more narrow and nuanced questions. With that said, I also gave myself permission to diverge from the protocols should the opportunity or need arise. For example, I left myself time and flexibility should unexpected leads appear during an interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

For both Amanda and Deborah, I was interested in hearing about their experiences in the library as well as their life accounts (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 20). As I sought to understand their identities and how the space had impacted this,
contextualizing their current practices within a larger career and network of relations (Leander et al., 2010) was needed. It was not just their current positions (Moje & Luke, 2009) that I was interested in—both as teacher and librarian—but it was the evolution of the positions that the women had taken up within their profession that had led them to where they currently were. For this reason, I also chose to interview Amanda right after she transitioned to the third-grade classroom. These “laminations” (Moje & Luke, 2009) were part of what makes their positioning conflicted. I also asked Amanda and Deborah to reflect on their own definitions of literacy, and how they saw literacy as enacted in the space of the library to complement my observations.

Dyson and Genishi (2005) assert that, with children, “even the most formal interviews—scheduled in advance and with some guiding questions—are conversational and narrative in style” (p. 76). The interviews were designed to deepen what I learned from the classroom observations, as well as helped me to gain the perspectives of multiple participants. When interviewing students, it was essential that my protocols were even shorter and structured more informally than the protocols that I used with Amanda and Deborah. Clark and Moss (2011) adopt a multimodal approach to working with young children, arguing that young children express their views and experiences in multiple, creative ways when given the space to do so. In their approach, Clark and Moss (2011) utilize children’s maps, photographs, and drawings to learn more about children’s lives. Vivian Paley (1997) has also explored this notion of voice, visual arts, and stories with children. In her classroom, students engage in visual arts, and connect to fictional stories and characters, to explore their own identity in very profound ways (Paley, 1997).
To begin my work with the students, I invited students to photograph five things in the library. This was open-ended, and I then used these photographs to invite students to tell me more about why they may be drawn to these particular places within the library. Using these photographs as a platform for conversation, I discovered the ways in which the students create social spaces for themselves within the larger library, and what that meant for how they used the library space. During the second interview, I asked students to draw, map, or otherwise represent the library, as well as whom they were in the library. Allowing children to draw their own experiences provided insight into how they saw their own social worlds and present their own social selves. During each interview, I left space for fluid questions and conversation that arose from their photographs and representations. Then, building on their photographs and representations, I also asked the students about their own experiences and feelings in the library, and how they felt about the library space in relation to their classroom space (see Appendix F for student interview questions). This resembles Leander’s (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) work with older students, who were invited to draw open-ended representations and descriptions of a smaller school, situated within a larger institution. The student sketches revealed the ways in which they read the two social spaces, in particular, the patterns of race and privilege that circulated through the spaces (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) in different ways.

After asking my focal students to consider similarities and differences between the library and classroom spaces, I asked them to reflect on the ways in which they read and write in the library to unearth the way that they see themselves as taking up different literacy practices in different spaces. These representations and questions provided
insight into how students constructed their identities as readers and writers in the library space through language and social interactions (Rogers, 2011), and the implications that this had for the classroom. While the initial interviews with focal students were conducted individually, the third (for Carla and James) and third and fourth (for Nikki and Mark) were conducted together. While I wanted to understand the thoughts and processes of each individual focal child, I was also interested in the social interactions and dynamics that arose from interviewing the children together. Each interview that I conducted was fully audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Additionally, I took notes during the process to capture the nonverbal elements of the interaction (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In particular, capturing context clues was essential, and I attended to features such as the intonation and gesture that the participants use when communicating (Corsaro, 1981).

Artifact Collection

To augment the observations and interviews that occurred in the library space, I also wanted to document what already existed. Collection of documents and artifacts was an essential component of this study in efforts to see what was conveyed about literacy through the textual and artistic elements of the space. I positioned these artifacts within Soja’s (1996) Firstspace; that is, the observable elements of space. In collecting these elements, I analyzed the literacies that were privileged in this space more deeply and identified tensions in the ways in which literacy circulated. This consisted of a collection of schedules, materials on the wall, library standards, lesson plans, teacher-created charts, and other pertinent materials. In addition, I also collected examples of products that my focal students created (maps, responses to reading, and art projects). Ultimately, all work
produced in the library, whether formal or informal, completed or incomplete projects, was collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Ghiso, 2015).

Also, text excerpts from the texts that the teacher read assisted my analysis, as I took the stance that text selection matters in teaching literacy, and these selections had implications for how students engaged with the texts. I took photographs of the space (excluding people). For example, how the books in the library were organized was essential to my examination of the library. In studying how the students interacted with the texts in the library, concrete visuals of the environment served to anchor these interpretations as I began to analyze the data. Within spatial perspectives, materiality certainly has a role to play in how the space gets constructed and negotiated, (Soja, 2010), albeit one role of many.

While artifact collection was central to my case study, I also engaged in artifact production as another source of data. For example, drawing on Leander et al. (2010), Wohlwend (2008) conceptualizes a kindergarten classroom as a nexus of practice, where material and social histories construct identities and students use objects to mediate their environment. Wohlwend (2009) argues that students construct “play spaces” (p. 62) around objects (in this case, toys) that carried cultural capital in the classroom. To study these play spaces, she used mapping as a methodological tool to organize reports from children, her own field notes, and data from videotaping. She calls for more research to "map discourses, identities, practices, and meanings across a sequence of time-spaces that weave in and out of pretend and real-world contexts" (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 80). Similarly, Leander (2002) has demonstrated the significance of documenting students’ spatial positioning during observations. Noting students’ embodied positions
during observations, and marking the various movements (such as swiveling, standing, etc.) that they make, can demonstrate how students use the space to interact with others and what the nature of those interactions might be (Leander, 2002). Therefore, in taking up a spatial lens, I created maps during observations, marking where both Amanda, Deborah, and my focal students gathered, from where they selected books or other materials, and what sorts of literacy practices they took up, and where they took them up in the various spaces within the library.

Because I take an inclusive view of literacy, I believe that the world (and the texts therein) can be read (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Indeed, the library is textually and visually rich and complex. What is spoken, drawn, written, and enacted in the library all converges to create the constructed curriculum (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Signs, documents, and other documents are “potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of the participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 160). For example, Amanda’s creation of a graphic novel display, and subsequent pride in students expressing their interest in graphic novels, demonstrated her beliefs about what texts count in the library, and who had access to those texts. Similarly, Deborah’s integration of Thanksgiving and African-American history writing pieces, and subsequent display of the pieces, illustrated her desire to showcase student work. This documentation of “the constantly changing collection of children’s books and print on the walls” (Wohlwend, 2011, p. 251) was important both for understanding the library space (part of which is material), as well as the implications for identity. It was essential to note that the collection of artifacts will not interrupt the flow of a typical lesson or other events in the library (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Ultimately, although I entered this study with a
plan, I also followed Luttrell (2000) who argues for the need to adopt “what I call ‘good enough’ methods, whereby researchers view their fieldwork as a series of ongoing realizations that lead to complex choices and decision making” (p. 50). Flexibility, and the freedom to pursue inquiries that arose while I collect the data, were also constructed into this design.

**Data Analysis**

Like Dyson and Genishi (2005), I viewed the data analysis process as something that was ongoing and began well before data collection had completed. It was the ongoing assemblage of many complex puzzle pieces (LeCompte, 2000) that continued through my initial collection until I had reached data saturation. Therefore, it was not an isolated event, but was a recursive and inductive process that began when I started collecting my data and was something that I returned to throughout the dissertation study. In fact, Corsaro (1981) argues that analyzing data throughout the collection period can help focus your study as you continue. As he states: “I pointed to the importance of using information gained at one phase in the research process for later phases of data collection and analysis” (Corsaro, 1981, p. 144). What doesn’t seem important now may turn out to be later. For example, many scholars suggest that analysis can begin even during the data collection period (e.g. Bartlett, 2007; Horvat, 2013). In describing the methodology for her study, for example, Bartlett (2007) argues that we might confirm or discredit hunches, which ultimately can shift the direction of our inquiry and might help us to continue thinking though the complexity of our learning. Therefore, I engaged in analytic memo
writing (Maxwell, 2005) each week during my data collection period, and these became an essential part of my analysis.

When data collection had officially ended, to ensure that I took adequate time and truly approached my data analysis as an inductive, iterative process, I first organized all of my documents, photographs, memos, and samples of student work. My next step was to take one read through everything, writing another researcher memo (Maxwell, 2005) about my initial reactions, connections, and emerging themes. Driven by curiosity (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), I uncovered “new spaces” for inquiry in the developing case and asked “new questions” about what I had learned (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81).

**Coding the Fieldnotes and Spatial Maps**

Although my data analysis was an inductive process that I would return to throughout the duration of the study, I spent time at the completion of data collection carefully reading through my whole data set chronologically (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In other words, I gave myself time to immerse myself in my complete corpus of data (Emerson et al., 2011). Developing a set of codes, as Dyson and Genishi (2005) contend, is a method for directing myself, and readers of my eventual dissertation study, to potential meaning. Essential to the more formal coding of my fieldnotes, however, is the understanding that data is never objective. Because I selected it, I had already engaged in interpretation and evaluation about which data was worth attending to (LeCompte, 2000). Aligning with my research questions and theoretical frameworks, I read through my fieldnotes multiple times, “looking to identify threads that can be woven together to tell a story (or number of stories) about the observed social world” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 171).
I began the coding of my fieldnotes with open coding (Emerson et al., 2011; Dyson & Genishi, 2005), where I “brainstormed possible kinds of relevant information” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 85), and began to categorize my pieces of data. Of course, much of my data set already had emergent codes and interpretive comments, so I revisited these during this first period of open coding as well, becoming more focused with each read. During this first open coding period, I was sure to refrain from excessive categorization and organization and strove to code for ideas and themes (Emerson et al., 2011). Examples of initial codes that arose for me were “notions of literacy” that my focal students took up, which meant everything ranging from selecting books based on the “level” that they thought that they were, or different types of engagements with books that they took up. Simultaneously, I coded for “mobility across space,” where students both traversed the physical space of the library and took up various discourses of literacy (see Appendix C for codebook excerpts).

Once my initial reading of the entire data set was completed, and initial codes were made, I sorted my data set by participant. Because I was interested in how identities are constructed through literacy and space (Leander & Sheehy, 2004), each participant’s interview and observation data was grouped together to allow me to have a more in-depth view at their multiple, and perhaps conflicted, experiences in this space and how their identities were implicated by these experiences. The process of indexing my fieldnotes was essential to my own organization. For each data set, I kept a list of codes (and page numbers) with where they appeared.

Additionally, I also coded specific chunks of data in more focused ways (Emerson et al., 2011), line-by-line. For example, in examining literacy practices in one section of
my fieldnotes, I decided to look for evidence of smaller literacy practices that made up a larger event. After looking at multiple chunks of interesting data line-by-line, I also engaged in memo writing to “explore a general pattern or theme that cuts across a number of disparate incidents or events” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 187). In this way, the process of my coding was recursive—a movement from looking at individual events, synthesis, and back again.

Because I employed a spatial theoretical framework, however, my analysis of space also took a more complex approach than just thick description and coding fieldnotes. Sheehy (2010), drawing on Jacklin (2004), explains how she used space/time rhythm maps to trace patterns of pedagogy in the classrooms where she researched. She argues that the enactment of each of these pedagogies is important, as they produce certain kinds of space. For example, teacher-led, initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) teaching leads to certain kinds of student talk and engagement, and certain kinds of literacies as privileged in this process. On the other hand, less constrained student browsing of books produces a quite different type of social space. In my own work, I took up this notion of rhythm maps (Sheehy, 2010) as a component of my fieldnotes, noting instructional practices such as: teacher-led discussions, student inquiry-led activities, worksheet activities, or book browsing. Then, in the same map, I noted how the class experienced these pedagogies through their reactions and responses (noting my focal students in particular).

During my data analysis process, I color-coded moments of excitement, moments of spatial movement, and other reactions. These maps, where I noted the movement and embodied positioning of students, then provided a visual tool for tracing and analyzing
the ups and downs of student engagement in literacy in the library, over and across time. Schmidt (2017) takes up the notion of “hacked landscapes”, where she argues that artifacts are not fixed, but can be pieced apart to uncover tensions. Piecing apart moments of my spatial maps, then putting them together with my fieldnotes to focus in on smaller increments of time, produced a new type of artifact that lent itself to analysis, which helped me get at new slices in my data with a fresh perspective.

Therefore, I used coding only as long as it assisted me in finding “coherence” (Luttrell, 2000, p. 503), rather than as a rigid structure. My theoretical framework informed the ways in which I coded data, and the analysis process as a whole. Therefore, many of my codes aligned with theories of literacy, space, and identity and the ways in which they overlapped and intersected. Both the spatial and identity theories that I employed guided my analysis, helped to unify and make sense of my data, and provided a rationale for my research methodology (Henstrand, 2006). Therefore, I gave myself permission to deviate from this plan. In other words, I was not “rigidly confined to one procedure” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 173).

**Discourse Analysis**

When studying language and literacies from a critical lens, scholars often turn to discourse analysis as both a theory and a systematic method for studying the complexity of language and discourses in social organizations, as our social worlds are constructed through language, discourse, and literacy (though there is no singular method). Rogers (2011) reminds us that “critical approaches to discourse analysis recognize that inquiry into meaning making is always also an exploration into power” (p. 1), and for my work, I was interested in the power of the library space in constructing notions of who is literate,
and who is not (and the potential for fluidity between). Discourse analysis, then, was a fruitful method for this work, as Wohlwend (2008) contends that “layering discourse analysis onto ethnographic data collection is a highly effective way to examine the social practices and situated language that affect children’s participation” (p. 129) and can therefore complement data gleaned from my observations.

In my data analysis, I found myself relying largely on spatial analysis, though complimenting my spatial thinking with discourse analysis of particular interview transcripts. To use discourse analysis in this selective manner, I drew primarily from Gee’s (2005) method of discourse analysis, with elements from multimodal discourse analysis (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013) to code interview data and engage in artifact analysis. This, first, required that I transcribe all of my interview data, which I did verbatim. Like my fieldnotes data, the first step was to read my transcriptions in their entirety—to “sit” with the data to think about “themes, images, or motifs” (Gee, 2005, p. 153) that seemed to be connected and resonate in the library context.

I attended to speech through the process of discourse analysis, because I believe that identities, relationships, and social contexts are constructed through communication (Gee, 2000-2001; Rogers, 2011). For this reason, I wanted to pay particular attention to both the broader Discourses around literacy that my participants engaged in, as well as the discourses (the language-in-use) that my participants used to convey engagement within the Discourses. However, I followed Gee (2005) that “speech always has far more detail in it than any recording or transcription system could ever capture” (p. 106). In fact, language alone was not enough to demonstrate membership in or knowledge of a Discourse. I know that my transcriptions were not be able to document the various
discourses that my participants engaged in, which is why my interviewing also included fieldnotes of multimodal communication.

As one such example of how I included the nonverbal elements of discourse in my data, I looked to Rogers and Wetzel (2013). Because they argue that discourse is more than just spoken language, and encompasses a variety of multimodal tools, Rogers and Wetzel (2013) draw from multimodal discourse analysis, which recognizes the multimodal activities involved in interactions, representation, and ways of being. As they demonstrate, marking movement (such as gazes), gesture, and linguistic choices also convey meaning, particularly when paired with speech. When discourse analysis is conducted only with transcripts of what is verbally said, some meaning is inherently lost. In an account of a teacher and child reading together, they demonstrate how attending to elements such as a “shared gaze” (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013, p. 94) in a discourse analysis transcript drew the child’s attention to illustrations in the text and supported the child in focusing on the meaning of the story. To construct a multimodal transcript, Rogers and Wetzel (2013) begin with the verbal mode, where subsequently the “nonverbal action is inserted as closely to the verbal discourse that overlaps it” (p. 141). With this form of transcript, nonverbal exchanges—such as turn taking, gesturing, or a child popping out of his/her seat—can be analyzed alongside their verbal counterparts (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013). The construction of these multimodal transcripts was especially important as I interviewed my focal students, who were engaged in drawing and speaking with me simultaneously. Therefore, it was imperative that I attended to these nonverbal exchanges, weaving verbal transcriptions with the fieldnotes taken during interviews, in
every attempt to construct multimodal transcripts to analyze for a richer collection of data.

To employ discourse analysis, as I engaged in analysis of both the aforementioned multimodal transcripts and written artifacts, I attended specifically to issues of identity, relationships, the politics of language, and the activities that occurred in the space (Gee, 2005). Because speech was often conveyed in chunks, I organized the portions of my transcripts, or textual artifact, into lines or stanzas that I then examined more deeply. Once textual chunks were organized, I employed tools of inquiry to code for situated meanings (Gee, 2005) of words and phrases, as well as attend to the larger social practices (Gee, 2004) in which these situated meanings were located. Situated meanings were key words and phrases (and corresponding linguistic details) that, given my knowledge of the research context, were relevant. For example, codes such as “inquiry” or “project-based learning” had situated meanings that are embedded in Amanda’s larger social practice around teaching literacy in a student-centered and inquiry-based manner. Codes such as “browse” and “respond” also had particular meanings to this library site, referencing specific behaviors, and were taken up by Amanda, Deborah, and the students.

Social practices, when approached critically, examine social relationships in terms of their implications for status, solidarity, social goods, and power (Gee, 2011). Coding such situated meanings and social practices operate dialectically, as both inform the other. In fact, Gee (2005) states that this method “is a reciprocal and cyclical process in which we shuttle back and forth between the structure (form, design) of a piece of language and the situated meanings it is attempting to build around the world, identities, and relationships” (p. 118). These situated meanings, therefore, were important, as they
helped trace larger patterns of social practices that became present through my interviews, observations, and artifact collection. These social practices, in turn, helped me theorize around how Amanda, Deborah, and the focal students were engaging in literacy throughout the library space, and how they were subsequently constructing their identities in relation to these literacy practices.

Therefore, my engagement in discourse analysis felt much like the deconstruction of a large puzzle, and then the subsequent reconstruction. To understand identity, I first located patterns of discourse and practice that operated in the library. To locate these patterns required that I attended to the smaller units of language that make up (with the nonverbal elements) a larger discourse. Again, like the coding of fieldnotes, this was not a plan or a method to which I was bound. Gee (2005), in fact, asserts that he doesn’t intend that his method of discourse analysis be followed step-by-step. Similarly, as I began to analyze artifacts, I remained cognizant that “social space is not simply acted into but is dynamic and relational, produced through social-material relations of practice” (Leander, 2002, p. 204), and thus, artifacts helped me understand the construction of social space in the library. Therefore, these artifacts were interpreted in relation to the space and their social practices, and not removed from them. Artifacts, then, might be deemed as inappropriate or appropriate, and powerful or not powerful in the library as compared to other spaces in the school (Leander, 2002). One example of this might be a graphic novel with a sophisticated level of text, which was deemed appropriate for browsing in the library and yet at an inappropriate level for reading in the classroom. The graphic novel, then, must be analyzed in the context that it is selected and used (in this case, the library), not as an isolated artifact. How children take up, talk about, and use
these artifacts, if at all, has implications for how the social space of the library is constructed.

**Interpretive Validity**

As a qualitative researcher engaging in a case study, I made no attempt to generalize, but rather, to ensure that my research was valid and trustworthy. A case study is both particular and general (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) and while I did not seek generalizability, I do hope that implications for other school spaces can be drawn from this work. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) speak of the need to listen closely, as this gives the practitioner’s story validity. It is for this reason that I elected to engage in multiple observations and interviews with each participant. Multiple sources of data ensured that I had collected a wide range of information and insights. I viewed my research as a process of shared narrative unity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), where my caring relationship with Amanda and Deborah is what allowed me to be privy to their own beliefs and frustrations. This caring relationship could also be described as taking up an “ethic of care” (Campano, Ghiso, & Welch, 2016), where research is done with (not on) participants, and in a grounding of mutual care, respect, and love.

**Role of the Researcher**

I take the stance that all ethnographic research involves both power and interpretation. I align myself with Luttrell (2000) who argues: “I don’t believe that researchers can eliminate tensions, contradictions, or power imbalances, but I do believe we can (and should) name them” (p. 500). I could not separate myself from this work, as
my own identity and legacy has implications for the ways in which I was positioned (and position myself) in the research site. Who I was as a researcher, and the multiple and overlapping identities that I took up during this study, influenced what questions I asked, where in the room I gravitated toward, and how I interpreted that data that I collected (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Because the nature of my work was a qualitative case study, where I had strong ties to my participants and the site, I took care to show my own researcher self (Peshkin, 2000) and how this impacted my work. In fact, my identity influenced every step of my study design, and continued to influence the ways in which I collected and analyzed data. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that as scholars engage in reflective research, our stories are often changed or restored; in this way, my data collection and analysis was be simultaneous, complementary, and recursive. As stated before, one of the tools that I employed in reflective research was the analytic memo. Although Maxwell (2005) asserts that analytic memos can be used for a variety of purposes, I typically used memos as a reflection tool to assist me in deconstructing my own analysis, remaining aware of how my subjectivities impact my role, and to provide a space (that is different than my fieldnotes) where I could work through what I was seeing, thinking, and feeling. My researcher memos varied in their length, formality, and content (Maxwell, 2005). I strove to write memos consistently, to both augment and complement the fieldnotes that I took more systematically. When I collected my data, these researcher memos assisted me in reflecting back on the entire process, as well as how my own identity influenced the ways in which I read and interpreted the data. As Maxwell (2005) states: “not writing memos is the research equivalent of having Alzheimer’s disease; you may not remember your
important insights when you need them” (p. 12). Therefore, as I began to pour through the data and explore emerging themes, utilizing researcher memos helped me document my thoughts, reactions, and insights in the moment.

**Presentation of Findings**

The rest of this dissertation study is devoted to presenting two analysis chapters, and one implications chapter. The first data analysis chapter is devoted to exploring the library as a space of tensions, and a contested space with many circulating discourses. The second analysis chapter explores the pockets of more fluid literacy practices that students took up, highlighting moments of play. The final chapter will discuss implications, both for practitioners invested in school libraries, as well as future research. I hope to posit through this work that inciting true collaborations where school librarians are equal partners in professional collaborations may indeed be a first step in successfully positioning librarians as professionals who share in the complex work of educating our students.
Chapter IV
NEGOTIATING COMPETING LITERACIES IN THE LIBRARY

“They [low readers] were so engaged in the book that it kind of confirmed in my head that there should be a time in the day where they’re not locked into a level. There should just be a time in the day where because they want to have this book in their hands, that they can choose that book. I couldn’t imagine going back from that.”
(9/29/2016 interview with Amanda, p. 5)

I open with this quote from an interview with Amanda, who framed the library as a space that was distinct from assessment-based reading. This was contrasted with Mark’s statement of, “I like reading books. And, my mom said if you read books you get more smarter with writing. And more, more like, like you can read to students, and you can read to your brother, and to your other brother, and to your sisters” (INT, 11/10/2017). Here, Mark made a clear connection between reading books and becoming smart. He discussed books as a form of enjoyment, but beyond that as a tool for “becoming” something—becoming a reader. These statements demonstrate the inherent tensions that circulate within the library, where it is both a space to experience reading as a social activity, and yet a space that is still entrenched within larger discourses of assessment and accountability, often resulting in decreased library time, or the disappearance of libraries in some schools altogether (Everhart, 2000a).

Carla, James, Mark, and Nikki, through the snapshots that I collected, all demonstrated these tensions to varying degrees. While they often relied on autonomous notions of literacy, where literacy learning unfolded in a linear way through a series of neutral skills (Street & Street, 1995), these notions have also been informed by “schooled
literacies” (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) where students learned the appropriate behaviors, embodiment, and attitudes that were marked as desirable in schools. Importantly, these cognitive and schooled notions often overlap and connect to one another. Despite this, there were also instances of playfulness in the library, where the space began to “crack” and gave way to a construction that was more fluid (Soja, 1996), interrupting expected and normalized literacy practices. Detailed in this chapter are the unique browsing periods, where students engaged in movement with one another and with texts. However, read-alouds and response periods, where bodies were disciplined according to traditional school expectations, were also layered on the space, as students navigated the discourses of what “good reading” looked like (Enriquez, 2014). In other words, the library might be conceived of as a fast-changing palimpsest (Huysen, 2003), where space and literacy practices were produced and reproduced socially through events and across time (Mills & Comber, 2015).

City Partnership School’s Library

City Partnership School, as introduced in previous chapters, was situated within a historically African-American, urban community. The library sat on the fourth floor of the school, which often left its visitors breathless as they climbed the narrow flights of stairs. The library at City Partnership School, in many ways, resembled a typical school library. It was a large, inviting space. There were several parts of the library: one side had tables and chairs, and the other side (separated by a long bookshelf) was surrounded by rows of books. There were shelves of books, a favorite being the “spinny shelf” (a shelf which spun around to display books), which housed series such as Dork Diaries (Russell,
2009) and *Critter Club* (Barkley, 2013). There was an alphabet rug that faced the librarian’s chair and an easel, with two beloved “comfy chairs,” where students were permitted to sit during browsing periods in a first-come, first-serve basis. The alphabet rug was wrapped in shelves of books, from low shelves displaying Mo Willems (a favorite author), to rows of fiction books in alphabetical order. To the far right on the shelf was a “donated books” section, which Amanda conjured up after receiving donations from families. Because they were not library books, students were permitted to read them in the library or even borrow them without having to check them out.

Each class at City Partnership School visited the library at least twice per week, and sessions alternated between “browsing” and “responding” sessions. Each session began with a read-aloud and discussion, after which students were either directed to respond in writing to what they had read, or they browsed and checked out books for the week. Deborah, the school librarian during the time of most of this data collection, inherited many of these practices from Amanda, who had in turn inherited them from the previous librarian. In this way, the library was a space that was networked across individuals and other spaces, given the various histories (classroom teacher, substitute teacher) that each individual brought into the space to shape what was possible. While each librarian made the space her own, the grooves of the institutional norms were well-worn, as were the discourses that were actively being invoked and reproduced in the library. Therefore, the library was a conflicted space as each librarian navigated the tensions between their own vision and the institutional norms.

In following Wohlwend (2008), I position the browsing sessions of the library as “multimodal literacy” (p. 135) events, and often playful events at that. While I take the
stance that all literacy events are multimodal; I viewed the browsing periods as unique in that students were given permission to traverse space, unlike during the other literacy times (sitting on the rug during read-alouds and sitting at the tables during reading responses). Students did not have the flexibility to traverse space in the same way during the read-alouds and reading response times, though at times they did it subversively. Of course, while the browsing sessions had a shared or situated meaning (Gee, 2005), one that conveyed the particulars of browsing (texts, movement, and space) within this context, students also constructed very different experiences within them. I recognize that “children are part of multiple social and cultural worlds before entering school spaces” (Yoon, 2014, p. 112), and therefore, the library space is just one space that is layered upon many, and situated within multiple, overlapping, and at times diverging social worlds where various notions of literacy circulate and compete.

This view, of course, is intimately tied to my positionality. My many literacy experiences have, over the course of my life, laminated (Moje & Luke, 2009) into my identity as a reader, teacher, and researcher. As a researcher, I looked forward to the browsing sessions, which I found joyful. I found pleasure in watching students connect with texts, with one another, and to read in a manner that was free from assessment.

**The Library as a Networked Space of Materials and Social Processes**

While the library may always be positioned as a distinct space—in relation to and yet separate from the classroom—my analysis of the library at City Partnership School reveals how complex and contested the space was. Rather than framing the library as an isolated space within a school, I seek to follow Leander et al. (2010) in positioning the
library as a networked space, one that was connected to the classroom, but also to the community, and to the “other spaces” (Foucault, 1986) in the school. As Foucault (1986) goes on to describe, these spaces are penetrable. Because of these networks and connections, the pressures of the larger school institution began to seep in, for example, in the disruption of the space to prioritize testing schedules, or the remaking of the library space to accommodate the impending classrooms as City Partnership School grows (personal communication, 6/3/2017). However, students also brought their own notions of literacy into the library, integrating cognitive and autonomous notions of reading and reading levels with the more fluidly designed space. Therefore, the library was both a product and a social process (Leander & Sheehy, 2004), and was constantly in the making as some networks gave way to others, and new networks formed. In the making and remaking of these networks, competing notions about literacy emerged, which circulated throughout the space to varying and shifting degrees.

In this chapter, I take up notions of spatial mapping as an analytic tool in efforts to see how the library space was networked as materials, bodies, and ideologies interacted and became layered to produce different spaces. In the maps that I include, I concentrated on parts where movement and embodied positioning occurred close together, with the student as a hub of activity. That is, even when students did not move, they positioned their bodies in particular ways. Mapping can place humans and human activity within the physical and material space (Powell, 2016) in ways that traditional ethnographic fieldnotes may not. Each student and librarian had lived experiences that were spatial, and mapmaking can serve as a way to begin the conversation about these lived experiences (Powell, 2016). This image of the library as a layered palimpsest
(Huyssen, 2003) was constructed as materials, bodies, and ideologies collided, overlapped, and laminated dialectically across the multiple dimensions of space (Soja, 1996).

**The Transformation and Repurposing of Spaces**

Human interaction and organization of materials and physical space was something that Amanda was highly conscious of in the beginning of the year, as she prepared the space for new groups of students. Before school started back up for a new year, Amanda had expressed her desire to get the space organized for the students, and her excitement at being back in the library, hoping that this year she would find her stride, as last year, she spent three months in the middle of the year substituting in a third-grade classroom as a maternity leave replacement. During these initial visits, as we moved around the library, she showed me a larger area of donated books, many donated by families of City Partnership School, and other places. She expressed that while she loved having all the additional resources at the school, the library seemed to be a “dumping ground” (8/31/2016 FN) where people brought lots of leftover items to, such as books given by families or stuffed animals leftover from discarded character building curricula. Ultimately, because the library had room for these additional items, they were brought there, yet this ultimately created more work for her in terms of organization. It was a space created—in part—by the leftovers of other spaces, and her subsequent organization and reorganization of those materials.

To put these Firstspace materials (books) to use—they were of varying topics, levels, and newness—Amanda had an idea. She couldn’t inventory them and put them in the library with books owned by the school, but she could offer them to students who
couldn’t check out books (for lots of reasons such as no returned contract, or books that were still checked out). She had cleaned out a shelf and had gathered several bins to organize the books by topic (Fairytale, Beginning Readers, Lego and Superhero Books, etc.) We spent some time organizing these books and creating labels for the bins. This way, Amanda said, students could still take a book home if they weren’t allowed to check out library books. Because they were donated, she said that she didn’t mind if students forgot to bring the books back (8/31/2016 FN, p. 2).

As evidenced by the bins, the donated books were organized both by genre, as well as by level of difficulty. For example, there was a book labeled “chapter books” and “easy readers,” as well as “superheroes and Lego books,” “rhythm and rhyme,” and “realistic fiction” (see Figure 1). While this organization scheme was practical in nature, the scheme also illustrated the complexities in organizing books. While the majority of the school library was organized by genre, displaying sub-genres and topics within both fiction and nonfiction texts, the parsing out of the “donated books” into level of difficulty signified how natural it is to organize books by perceived age or level—indicating the strength of cognitive notions of literacy.

This creation of a “donated books” section began to break down barriers that may have served to include or exclude students in the library. For example, there was often a stigma attached to not being able to check out books, whether it be overdue books or not having the library contract (where students and families agree to return books and pay for those lost or damaged) signed. While the “donated books” section materially produced a particular kind of space, the section also constructed a social space where all students had access to books, despite material library constraints. In other words, Amanda used the
material texts to construct a social space of inclusion and access, as a way of resisting the contract system in place. More specifically, these actions resisted the structures in place that determined who was eligible to borrow books, thus transforming the space from a “dumping ground” of donated books to an inclusive space that all children could equitably access.

Figure 1. Image of the “donated books” shelf.

While Amanda may have viewed the library as a “dumping ground,” she repurposed the unwanted materials into something different, resisting the library as a space for discarded materials. This demonstrated that the materials themselves were fluid and could be interpreted in many contrasting ways (e.g. perhaps these “unwanted” materials were significant to students). It was the interaction between the materials themselves, and Amanda’s repurposing of the materials, that produced a new kind of fluid space, one that sought to provide more equitable opportunities for those that reside
within (Soja, 1996), in this case, the students. The materials had significance, but so did the actors (in this case, Amanda). Amanda’s actions in this instance demonstrated her commitment to the school library as a space of access, working around the bureaucratic systems that in many ways served to reproduce who had access to literacy.

**Borders Between Library and Classrooms are Permeable**

Movement and embodiment across space was not divorced from the materials that made up the physical space and with which students interacted. Books, of course, are typically what we envision when we picture a library. Books shaped the library space at City Partnership School, as did the decisions to organize other materials, such as student work and the display of library expectations. While learning standards were inherently language and discourse, putting them into writing served as a way to concretize and make visible the expectations—it made the library standards tangible. Historically, school libraries have had their own standards, which have been deliberately kept separate from classrooms and often removed—despite recent moves to connect these—from direct accountability measures. However, the influx of reading aloud and reading responses to City Partnership School’s library suggests that school curriculum and standards were entering the library space, gradually shaping it into an extension of the classroom, where standards were continually revised to encourage more rigor. As an institution, City Partnership School had a continual need to assess students and provide measures of student outcomes due to the culture of accountability that schools face (Olivant, 2015). One way that this was evident was in the displays of student work in public spaces of the school. In the hallways at City Partnership School, student work and subsequent evaluations (in the form of rubrics or peer/teacher feedback) were found (see Figures 2
and 3). Connected to this, then, was the decision by Deborah to display student work also in the library to demonstrate that learning had occurred.

![Figure 2. Carla’s writing, displayed in the hallway.](image1)

![Figure 3. Student work displayed in the library.](image2)

In Figure 3 above, from fourth grade students, Deborah neatly displayed each of their individual responses, in addition to writing out the prompt, where students were directed to write about something they were thankful for. These instances were reflective of a product approach to writing (Badger & White, 2000), one heavily guided by the teacher and focused on reception of a text, in this case, a read-aloud.

As Deborah explained, reading responses were an integral part of how she facilitated her library sessions. When I asked her about this, she discussed the Thanksgiving display (Figure 3). During an interview, she explained:

‘Please, give me an idea,’ was my last prayer in bed and then when I got up, I got up with that, ‘Oh, the Cornucopia, they can write how thankful they are and then when I correct it, I’m going to get the big fruits from out of the...’ [the office assistant] helped me get the copies from the computer, and they wrote their own,
after I corrected it, on there and then the fruits are coming out of the Cornucopia. I talked about, it didn't just that, we talked about being thankful. Okay, and we went deep… (12/15/2016 INT, p. 7)

Here, Deborah’s statements about her “last prayer” indicated a desire to design learning experiences that her students would enjoy, and simultaneously referenced the pressures that she felt to display learning in concrete ways. She described her discussion with the children as “deep,” but also navigated the tension between these deep thoughts and wanting to display finished work that was “corrected.” Therefore, it was not that the librarians necessarily brought notions of “schooled literacies” (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) such as listening appropriately to read-alouds, reading levels, and formal reading responses into the library deliberately. Although this may have indeed been the case, it was also that the constant schoolwide need to assess student work influenced what was possible in every space of the school, even those spaces that were not classrooms. This organization and displaying of Firstspace materials can construct spaces, like libraries, as homogenizing spaces, privileging certain Secondspace discourses and literacy practices over others (Mills & Comber, 2015) to mirror other school spaces. For example, the desire to display work across an entire school, as a tangible marker of student success, connected with the overarching need to visibly demonstrate student learning, an emphasis in New York City public schools for the past decade (Goodnough, 2002). Constructing multiple spaces that mirrored the classroom, however, has implications for equity, where students who adhere to the expected and privileged practices might be reinforced, while others are marginalized.

The discourses and practices of the classroom entered the library. The library was situated within the larger school institution and the institution itself was formed by
networks of materials, discourses, and social practices. Therefore, the library was a space that, in many ways, resembled a classroom, both in the physical organization of the space but also in the expectations for movement, although the library had pockets of fluidity that were distinct from the classroom. The absence of the physical levels—a Firstspace material—afforded fluid practices, despite the Secondspace discourses around reading levels that entered the space with force. The physical and material space of the library at large was organized in such a way that divided the room into two parts—the read-aloud and browsing section, and the work and response section. Similarly, time was divided neatly into these two sections, serving as another “organizing center” in which events were structured (Hirst, 2004). Time, therefore, cannot be separated from space (Mills & Comber, 2015). Library sessions followed a predictable pattern and structure, quite literally broken into 45-minute sessions. However, within that, Deborah organized time, albeit more fluidly. In fact, Deborah conveyed to the students that browsing was “your time” whereas “responding is my time” (2/8/2017 FN, p. 2). Therefore, she often would wait until students were quiet to conduct the read-aloud, saying that “browsing is your time, and I don’t care if you waste your time” (2/8/2017 FN, p. 2). This strengthened the binary between browsing as a fluid, student-driven time, and reading responses as a time of tangible production. The structure of time here, as it related to materials and the production of something—or lack thereof—produced different kinds of space.

The borders between these physical spaces and the social and ideological spaces that they produced, as well as the activities demarcated within each space, outlined by Deborah and others were both real and significant. They were both existing in real ways, but they were also permeable and not fixed. These borders are typically where we expect
to find difference (Schmidt, 2017). As such, the reading response, or “work area,” reflected schooled practices. The browsing area was slightly more fluid, constructing read-aloud experiences that resembled those conducted in classrooms, and yet simultaneously offered an open space for other types of literacy engagements, as fleeting as they might have been. I took up Schmidt’s (2017) notion of “hacked landscapes,” which she argued is a process of deconstructing something (such as an artifact) and reconsidering how the parts of the artifact might have alternative meanings. As I sought to “hack” the landscapes of the school library (Schmidt, 2017), I selected two artifacts (a photograph and a map, both produced by me) that I had interpreted/constructed to convey the space. Rather than seeing the space then as linear or cohesive, I pieced apart the materials and movement in order to uncover tensions.

A common theme—the library as a schooled space—arose across both the image of the browsing area and the map. In Figure 4, the rug area—a Firstspace notion—was deliberately set up to organize student bodies, and in the map of the rug during a read-

![Figure 4. Picture of the empty library.](image)

![Figure 5. Map of the browsing area.](image)
aloud (Figure 5), student bodies became physically organized in the squares of the rug. The physical organization of the space, therefore, did exactly as it was intended, to organize and manage student bodies.

On the other hand, Mark drew a map that had a different organization of space (see Figure 6) during one of the interviews that I conducted with him. Mark’s map demonstrated that students have understandings and interpretations of space that may diverge from mine, as the researcher.

![Mark's map](image)

**Figure 6.** Mark’s map (1/12/2017).

In Mark’s map, as he described, there was the Smartboard, books, posters (“READ” poster), the comfy chair, and the couch (1/12/2017 INT). Because Mark enjoyed Elephant and Piggie books, he highlighted one in particular called *Waiting is Not Easy!* (Willems, 2014). Rather than complete his map in a linear fashion, as I expected, Mark demonstrated how representing space is complex, and does not necessarily unfold
in a narrative structure, although narratives of his experience were certainly embedded in his view of the space (Powell, 2016). For example, Mark started at the bottom with the bookshelf, moved toward the middle of the page to draw the “READ” poster and *Waiting is Not Easy!* (Willems, 2014) book, and finally drew the larger squares (with “k” and “o” written on them) to depict the rug. In this way, perhaps Mark saw the library not as a space organized in a particular way, but as a space filled with things that he was able to engage with, and things that he equally loved and avoided. Importantly, Mark chose not to include the “work area” of tables and chairs, highlighting both commonalities but also raising questions, one being whether the “work area” was seen by children as part of the library. To Mark, space was produced through physical objects and materiality, but that materiality also worked to open new possibilities for the discursive Secondspace. Just as materials circulated within physical spaces to construct space and organize people within those spaces, people also had agency in producing space, and these dimensions operated in a dialectical manner. Powell (2016) contended that our selves become embodied as we interact with other humans, and with non-human materials. How students organized their bodies on my map (Figure 5) is contingent, in part, by what was possible in the physical organization (Figure 4).

**The read-aloud experience as an extension of classroom disciplinary practices.** While materials mattered in shaping what was possible in the library, materials weren’t all that mattered, as both librarians and students had agency in taking up discourses, embodiment, and movement in conjunction with those materials. Deborah emphasized the need for students to listen to read-alouds and discussion, and then whatever time was left was reserved for browsing and reading responses. During one
read-aloud (12/9/2016 FN, pp. 2-3), Deborah did a lot of redirecting of student behaviors. To the class, she discussed the importance of staying focused and not attending to students that played on the rug. To the student who was playing, Deborah said, “he’s going to make you not have enough time to respond” and reminded them that this day was their response day. Because of this, if they ran out of time, Deborah asked, “on Monday [next library session], guess who is not going to be able to browse?” This statement had an impact on students, who quickly reverted to listening, as they did not want to lose out on their browsing time. As Deborah read the story, she used phrases such as “give me a minute,” and “listen” to hold student attention. Here, situated within the influence of accountability discourses, Deborah also exercised her agency to construct a particular kind of social space—one that more closely resembled a classroom. In constructing the library as a space that in many ways mirrored the classroom, Deborah demonstrated how powerful the discourses of accountability and schooled literacy were in working to shape a space.

![Figure 7. Read-aloud map (12/9/2016).](image-url)
In focusing in on just one aspect of the library experience in efforts to illustrate space as produced through the movement of bodies, I created a spatialized narrative (Jones, Thiel, Dávila, Pittard, Woglom, Zhou & Snow, 2016), one which moved away from my focus on my focal children in efforts to see the read-aloud as a spatialized practice that included many individuals. Although Figure 7 does not show movement of bodies, I did aim to capture movement as it related to disciplinary practices, as well as embodiment as children attempted to respond to the text. In tracing movement, I demonstrated the ways in which students were disciplined (here, overtly disciplined) as they moved throughout the library. During this period, student bodies stayed relatively motionless, as they were expected to stay still on the rug and listen—a disciplinary practice entrenched in institutional norms (Enriquez, 2014). From the map above, many students attempted to participate, although few were called on. Significant movement seemed to arise in the form of redirection and physically removing students from the designated read-aloud space. Mark and Nikki, the focal students in this class session, were seated at the back of the rug. Mark raised his hand once to answer a question, stating his favorite part of the book.

During this read-aloud, bodies stayed predominantly still, though there were many student voices buzzing. In fact, Deborah—visibly frustrated—did so much redirecting of student talking that the class ran out of time for the read-aloud. At 9:15am, she asserted, “there’s no time to go over there!” while motioning to the bookshelves, and several minutes later, students were called to line up. Freedom of movement, here in this moment, was scarce. Space, however, was still produced whether it be through movement
or lack thereof. There was power in opening up the freedom to traverse space, as well as by shutting those opportunities down.

Due to interruptions, Deborah posed the question, “do you know what’s bad?” at the end of the story. Deborah here alluded to her disappointment that students had interrupted so much that they ran out of time. “When kids act out, we waste time. I keep telling you that,” she reminded students, while also informing them that they would have ten minutes taken away from their browsing time the following Monday. Rather than reserving time for browsing, Deborah used browsing time as a way to maintain her control of students, a reward or consequence for not following the outlined expectations of the library. The notions of browsing time and listening time were positioned at odds in this event, wherein the ability to browse was contingent on listening and sitting quietly. This library session felt more like traditional school—students seated, quiet, listening to instruction—than the more fluid browsing sessions. Sheehy (2004) characterizes spaces such as this as “thick” space, where students and teacher exchange ideas in a “well-trod path” (p. 9), often driven by teacher direction. Students quite literally stayed seated, with traditional participation structures, for the duration of this library session. During other times, “thin” space (Sheehy, 2004) was possible, where students had more agency in determining what happened with texts, bodies, and social structures; therefore, ideas didn’t always travel as expected. Even in the library, these “thin places” were fleeting, because the library itself was entrenched within larger accountability discourses.

These networks of space (Leander et al., 2010), where the classroom discourses entered the library to varying degrees, didn’t just “happen”—they were formed as a result of the intersections of space and power (Mills & Comber, 2015). When the sources of
power and agency shifted, the networks also shifted. In other words, the library didn’t just “become” more like the classroom randomly, and it didn’t simply take up autonomous notions of literacy. It began to mirror the classroom purposely after decisions and actions occurred over time in a way that policed the space and time. Yet, these decisions and actions weren’t always strategic. Sometimes, notions of schooled literacies, such as what read-alouds should look like and how student bodies should be arranged, were so entrenched in our culture of schooling that they may have gone unexplored or unnoticed—they became invisibly networked in.

**The library practices are networked to the classroom.** Meanwhile, still teaching in third grade, Amanda brought the values and commitments that she had developed as a school librarian, into the classroom with her, demonstrating how people shape space significantly through their ideologies and beliefs, which then become networked into a new space. Amanda’s identity, as a long-time teacher, influenced how she constructed the library space. When I asked her about this, she responded:

Oh, I’m sure. Yeah, I’m sure it does [influence her as the librarian]. It’s hard to even balance out what is being in the library as opposed to being a teacher, because you have librarians that are not teachers, and then you have teachers that are put in the library but they’re not librarians or certified librarians, so that’s where I fall. I’m not a certified librarian, so I think it’s that combination of being the teacher and teaching things in a teacher way at the same time as the technical library stuff and putting it all together. I definitely think having the teacher part comes out, for sure. Even when I’m not teaching something because we’re doing an activity that’s not a teaching activity, I feel like it still comes out. (9/29/2016 INT, pp. 2-3)

Conversely, Amanda also expressed how much her newly found librarian identity extended into the classroom space where she was for the remainder of this study. In that way, the library wasn’t a contained room that was left open to other networks, but the
library also shifted and moved across space (Sheehy, 2010). When asked about this reverse, Amanda replied:

I think my love for books and just when it’s read-aloud time, I feel like in third grade they don’t do as much read-aloud as the lower grades, which is awful, but whenever we do have read-alouds I feel like that comes out. I think that I probably always had that even before I went into the library, so I never thought about it until I was in the library how perfect of a place that was for me.

(9/29/2016 INT, p. 2)

Although no longer in the library, Amanda’s commitment to reading from an equity stance still emerged. Noticing that her new third-grade students didn’t experience as much reading aloud, Amanda integrated her love of reading aloud into the curriculum. In doing so, she provided students with access to a greater diversity of literacy experiences (one centered around enjoyment of a text), that diverged from the emphasis on reading solely at one’s independent level. In addition to the library as a space that shifted, Amanda’s transition demonstrated that the library was still a liminal space, and one that could quickly be minimized when other—more pressing—needs arose. Amanda, as a veteran teacher with a long history in the school (as one of the founding teachers), was deemed as needed in the classroom, rather than the library. While the library still had someone in there full-time, the implication was that the library as an instructional space was less important than the classroom, particularly in third grade where testing began. The library, then, while always being conceptualized in relation to the classroom and yet distinct from it (Dressman, 1997), remained a secondary space. Ultimately, Amanda was moved to fill an essential position, and then the library was filled after that. Because the library was a networked and fluid space that succumbed to change without much notice, notions about what literacy looked like in the library were complex and malleable.
Traversing Space as a Way to Perform as a Reader

The competing notions of literacy that circulated in the library carried significant implications for students. For Mark, who wanted to be a reader so desperately, having confidence in his ability was critical, and this confidence wavered across the school spaces that he traversed. As I observed him in the classroom (11/22/2016 FN, p. 6), for example, I noted how often he seemed to avoid reading. That is, much of his time was spent abandoning books, talking with his classmates, and wandering around to various parts of the room despite verbalizing his desire to read. He spent time sifting through books and searching until he found the right one. To engage with literacy and with one another, students often switched seamlessly through literacy modes (Wohlwend, 2008), like reading, walking, and chatting. Mark exemplified this as he moved around the room to read, converse, and engage in play seamlessly, and in relatively short periods of time.

In fact, there were many instances (e.g. 11/22/2016, 12/13/2016, 1/10/2017, and 2/8/2017) that I noted where Mark moved around the library (or classroom), abandoning books, selecting new books, and seemingly trying to find something that he could read successfully. I opted to observe Mark in several different environments, including his own classroom. Not only was the Firstspace, or physical space, different, but this observation also occurred during his regular literacy instruction, which meant that the discursive Secondspace also diverged. Here, I describe one event (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) in Mark’s classroom, where language and literacy were significant in producing space.

During a lesson on the differences between fiction and nonfiction texts in his classroom, Mark sat quietly and participated fully, raising his hand each time a question
was posed. When asked what “carnivores” ate (as it was positioned in the read-aloud book as an “expert word”), Mark was called on and answered, “trees and plants.” His teacher re-read the sentence and prompted him to listen again, and he was more successful the second try in answering, “ooooh… animals” (11/22/2016 FN, p. 2). Here, during the lesson, Mark made visible how he embodied the practices that help to establish himself as a “good reader” and shed an identity as a “struggling reader” (Enriquez, 2014), such as raising his hand and responding to the questions posed by his teacher. As Luke (1992) argues, these practices—monitored by the teacher—became ascribed to his body, as both teacher and student produced and reproduced these practices. Of course, this was commonplace in classrooms, but the library was also entrenched with these notions. What Mark deemed a “good reader” did not get abandoned at the library door but entered with him across both classroom and library spaces.

Later during this classroom session, the students transitioned to independent reading. Mark pulled out his book baggie of A and B books and selected a B level book about bugs. As I walked over to him, he struggled to read the sentence “six legs on a bug.” After reading the word “legs” incorrectly, Mark abandoned the book and picked a different one. He quickly flipped through it, and also put the next one down. He picked up a third book and held it over his head briefly, and then fanned his face with it. He turned to the other student at his table and talked quietly with him. The next time I turned to Mark, he had a fourth book—turned to a page with an octopus on it—and was counting the legs. As I moved closer, he selected a final book about weather. While he paused over the word “foggy” he read the sentence on the page. Turning to me, he smiled and said he wanted to read it again.
Mark, like his classmates, was a student who did not have the freedom to move around the physical space during his regular literacy block due to institutional norms. At times during this period, Mark took a long time to get read with his materials (11/22/2016 FN, p. 3). The entire class was expected to practice behaviors such as sitting still and focusing on one text, and students were occasionally redirected to sit “in their spots” (11/22/2016 FN, p. 4). However, the stakes for performing these behaviors were particularly high due to Mark’s status as a struggling reader. For example, Mark was more likely to be positioned as deficient if he deviated from this, whereas students with a higher marked success had more leeway. Therefore, while he demonstrated behaviors such as flipping through books, holding books over his head, and talking across the table (11/22/2016 FN, pp. 5-6), Mark also demonstrated efforts to ascribe the preferred behaviors by sitting still, in the star position. In the library, however, Mark was permitted to exercise this freedom of movement, as he traversed multiple social circles and reading environments with ease. In other words, he took advantage of the flexibility (Zacher, 2009) offered to him in the library that was not offered in the classroom. As a struggling reader in the classroom, Mark was able to temporarily shed this identity marker while in the library (Zacher, 2009), where his mobile practices were more acceptable.

In the library, Mark’s experiences were similar in some ways, but different in others. While Mark still exhibited behaviors such as abandoning of books, this was treated as part of the practice of “browsing,” which signaled freedom to select and engage with texts as one pleased. Like in the classroom, when Mark found success, he seemed proud. For example, on January 10th, 2017, Mark spent the library period browsing. First, he listened to a peer read, then wandered around on his own. He then read and looked on
with a different student, before finally selecting and then settling in across the room with an Elephant and Piggie book on his own, all within a 13-minute time span (see Figure 8). However, what was most interesting to me was what happened when the class was called to line up. Mark, still reading the Elephant and Piggie book out loud, walked to the bin to put it away. Before doing so, he read the rest of the book aloud to himself (Figure 8, 2:10pm), indicating a desire to finish the book.

![Figure 8. Spatial map of Mark browsing (1/10/2017).](image)

Mark, who did settle on a book that he could read successfully, sustained these practices in the moment. Without knowing that he was being watched, Mark took up the embodied position of a reader even in a space where he was not evaluated on these practices. As a social learner, Mark engaged in literacy with his classmates in privileged
ways, despite being marked as struggling. For example, during a final observation on May 15th, 2017, Mark joined a group of students on the rug during a browsing period, and they crowded around him as he held a Mo Willems book. Later during this same period, he selected a book while sitting on the bench, and yet didn’t ever open the book (5/15/2017 Map). While not engaging directly in reading, Mark was successful in positioning himself as a reader.

Together, these experiences laminated to construct a conflicted identity (Moje & Luke, 2009), one that was not the same from day to day, or even from minute to minute. The various social situations that Mark encountered intersected as he constructed a flexible identity (Zacher, 2009) for himself. As Enriquez (2014) contends, “the production and interruption of reading identities matters” (p. 109), as the stakes for being deemed successful or struggling are high. These layers of identity were, in part, constructed and made possible for Mark, but also for Nikki, Carla, and James by the various spaces within and across the library, classroom, and school and the ways in which literacy was taken up across these spaces and through these networks. Some spaces, like the library, offered pockets of more fluid reading practices and access to a diversity of texts, which may matter for the identity practices of students like Mark.

**Approval-Seeking for “Being a Reader”**

Despite pockets of fluidity and pleasure in reading, there was a clear connection between students being invested in and concerned with their reading levels, and the approval that they sought for participating in the expected behaviors. Therefore, selecting the “right” books and using the right strategies was something that many of these students took up even outside of the classroom. Receiving praise and validation for his behaviors
was more pronounced for Mark than with other students, perhaps because his reading ability was not consistently praised and was even at times, challenged. Nikki, on the other hand, seemed to not be concerned with her literate behaviors, unfazed by the approval or disapproval of others.

For Mark, participating in discussions was something that a good reader did. Often, I saw Mark raise his hand whenever a question was posed. He typically sat in the front of the room and displayed attentive behaviors, such as looking at the librarian and having his hands in his lap. Leander (2002) states that studying how students position their bodies in space is essential, and “in particular, the embodied spaces that participants are constructing with one another reveal much about the social spaces and figured worlds, claimed or implied, that they are jointly acting ‘into’” (p. 244). Mark desired to be “read” as a strong reader, and so he performed and positioned himself in ways that were privileged in the school setting (e.g. raising his hand, sitting quietly, participating during read-alouds, etc.), even when he was unsure of the answer.

During an observation on November 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2016, Mark listened intently to the read-aloud with his hands in his lap (11/9/2016 FN, p. 2). Several times, he looked back at me sitting in the back of the room and appeared to seek my approval for his behaviors. When directed to respond to reading by writing and drawing about a part of the story that they liked, Mark drew a picture of the bear putting his tail in the hole (see Figure 9 below). I noted during this observation that Mark was highly social as he responded to reading and talked frequently with his peers. Overall, Mark seemed to enjoy the social aspects of literacy in the library, and particularly loved being read aloud to. This intensive engagement during read-alouds can be contrasted with the great amount of time spent
wandering around the library during independent browsing time, and his tendency to flip through multiple books during his classroom reading (11/22/2016 FN, p. 6). Perhaps this was because he didn’t have to do the most difficult work of decoding, and could simply enjoy being read to, whereas his struggles were foregrounded in the latter example.

Figure 9. Picture from Mark’s reading response (11/9/2016).

Later in the school year (2/8/2016 FN, p. 1), Mark continued to exhibit schooled literacies and was validated by his teacher for going right to the rug and sitting in star position. During this same observation period, Mark was still highly attentive on the rug, and I noticed that he had received a ticket (2/8/2016 FN, p. 2) for his behavior. Therefore, his desire to display schooled literacies (an overcompensation for his lower reading level) was justified. Simply earning a ticket in front of peers validated Mark for making the choices that are set forth and reinforced by the larger school institution. Mark had been successful in “reading” what was expected in the various spaces of the school and altering his behaviors to match those behaviors. These behaviors were consistent with his
responses in our interviews, where Mark stated, “I like reading books. And, my mom said if you read books you can get more smarter with writing” (11/10/2016 INT, p. 7).

Again, on January 10th, 2017, Mark demonstrated how he adhered to schooled literacy practices, though still would break from this, as one might expect a first grader to do. For example, he turned around to laugh when a student behind him made a joke and stretched his legs out in front of him as he listened to the story (1/10/2017 FN, p. 3).

Importantly, Mark read the social context when making the decision to stretch out on the rug. His ability to toggle back and forth between what was expected, and yet play on/with this line, showed his desire to be perceived as a reader. In a similar vein, on January 25th, 2017, during a read-aloud, Mark proceeded to interrupt Deborah as she was reading *Frog and Toad*, shouting “he [character] should…!” Deborah laughed and responded by saying, “You keep telling him what to do, it’s a story! It’s already written. If you rewrite the story maybe you can tell them what to do” (1/25/2017 FN, p. 2). While an interruption to the story, Mark still demonstrated how he was highly engaged. However, the discursive space of the library—one that often resembled schooled read-alouds—accepted yet did not privilege Mark’s engagements with this story.

On the other hand, Nikki seemed less concerned with how she was perceived. In the library on January 25th, 2017 (1/25/2017 FN, p. 2), Deborah asked Nikki if her nose was bleeding, as her nose was red and irritated, and she had her head down (she was not bleeding). When Deborah turned back around, Nikki pointed at her mockingly. Unlike Mark, who overemphasized his schooled literacy behaviors (desiring approval), Nikki often produced responses to texts that resisted traditional narratives (Sipe & McGuire,
2006), as in the case described next around a *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (Lobel, 2003) text.

On December 9th, 2016, Nikki was seated in the back of the rug, as she usually was. While she did raise her and, she was not called on. Nikki demonstrated many characteristics of an engaged reader, as she drew on background knowledge and had a sophisticated way of approaching texts. As a student who was not as social as others, however, at times Nikki’s responses weren’t validated by the teacher. However, on January 25th, 2017, Nikki responded to the *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (Lobel, 2003) book, where the character was banging his head with, “he’s gonna lose brain cells!” and Deborah responded, “well, you don’t know that” (1/25/2017 FN, p. 3). In an analysis of writing instruction, Schneider (2001) discusses the ways in which some teachers, often inadvertently, direct student voices to topics that are more “appropriate.” Despite Nikki’s engagement and integration of her own background knowledge of brain cells, her response here went unvalidated, and almost unwelcomed, as a response to the text.

Levels, behaviors, and receiving validation for those behaviors were never separate from the library, as all spaces within the larger school were networked in such ways that beliefs and values about reading levels moved in and out of the space. Leveling of books and reading may not have been the starting place for how students selected texts in the library, but the influence of leveled texts was certainly still present. This, too, was because students internalized their reading levels (Kontovourki, 2012) as one indicator of their identity. As the children entered the space, so did the levels to which they were assigned. Perhaps it was not so much what students did with a book that “counted” in this space, but it actually began with the book that they had and/or could access. For instance,
so much attention was paid to text selection, that often the interactions with the text themselves were lost. To think that literacy was “in the book” reproduced the notion of literacy as something that developed in a trajectory and could be obtained. In this way, the Firstspace materials themselves had power in framing the discursive spaces that students took up. This is an issue of equity, both as students have different levels of access to physical texts (based on their ability level), as well as the freedom to engage with texts as they pleased.

The Library as a Liminal Space for Competing Ideas about Literacy

The library at City Partnership School was a space that was often transformed into what was deemed as most needed, such as a space for additional enrichment classes, parent meetings, or a testing center. In fact, it remained a library only so long as something else didn’t take precedent over the work of the library. The library, as it was traditionally known, could quickly dissipate. I anchor these observations in the belief that spaces are not objective or static but are constructed through the interactions and social structures that govern space.

As contested spaces, libraries have shifted and transformed according to social, political, and economic climates, though they have been removed from many of the overt accountability systems imposed on classrooms (Olivant, 2015). Rather, libraries have most typically been positioned as spaces that support and strengthen the formal literacy instruction within schools (New York City School Library System, n.d.), despite more recent moves to begin holding librarians accountable for student outcomes through assessing students. While garnering more recent attention as an instructional space,
particularly as notions of what literacies are valued in schools has shifted, school libraries have still been dissolved of the responsibility to directly produce student outcomes, and therefore, have the potential to take much broader views on literacy. However, the constraints on schools, and discourses of schooled literacy, narrow these possibilities. The library is therefore a contested space, one that sits at the intersection of competing discourses and pockets of freedom, which open and close. This is compounded by strains put on school libraries by policies and funding, which often mean budget cuts and difficulty staffing school libraries (Everhart, 2000a), especially in underserved areas.

With that said, the multiple iterations of library standards—and the space of the library itself—is reflective of shifting national priorities, ideologies, and events. Libraries as we know them today have, since the early 20th century, been an integral part of school institutions, providing opportunities for students to explore texts, pursue inquiries, and recently, explore digital and multimodal literacies. The role of school libraries has always been fluid, for example, 1918 saw the first iteration of school library standards (Michie & Holton, 2005), with many versions and revisions to follow for decades to come. Libraries, like schools at large, are contested spaces, both fluid and constrained.

While the library is thought to be a space that is free from assessment, however, “book levels” and assessment discourses nonetheless enter the library with force, demonstrating the complexity of the library as a set of relations. On one hand, the library offered a space for James to act out Mo Willems books with his friends (1/10/2017 Map), while in contrast, the library had the potential to close opportunities for student choice, play, and resistance. For example, at times the content of what students were permitted to read was regulated. During a browsing period on January 20th, 2017, Deborah explained
to the students that even though a book may be on their level, that didn’t mean that it was appropriate:

If you see violence that much, you’re going to grow up violent. Now don’t go home and say I said you will… I said if you see lots of violence. Be careful what put in mind! I like beauty of life, but those kinds of books aren’t. They’re the dark side of life! So don’t go there. Not for you! You’re in first grade! *Magic Tree House, Flat Stanley*, those are good. (1/20/2017 INT, pp. 4-5)

Whereas utopias are spaces with no real place and might be what we envision a library to be, Foucault (1986) defines heterotopias as contested spaces, real spaces. The library, therefore, is a heterotopia, one that continually shifts as different ideas about literacy and learning enter and exit. As Schmidt (2017) describes, “I moved from reading for cohesive, linear arguments to seeing complexity, tensions, and social structures” (p. 101). I again take up her notion of hacking across products, deconstructing each and then looking across artifacts for both moments of dissonance as well as themes.

**Book Choice as a Social Construct**

Just as assessments, accountability systems, and ways of leveling and sorting children influenced how literacy practices were taken up in the library, the notion of book choice and book selection has implications for this work. The material notion of book choice, while present in the classrooms, did not exist in the library space. As the library and classroom were both networked spaces, and were networked to each other, the fluidity of policies, accountability, and assessment-based discourses were ever-present in the networks. Even after Amanda’s shift to the third-grade classroom, I continued to observe her teach in several of her classroom sessions, seeking to see how she might construct the classroom space in overlapping and diverging ways. During one observation, students were book shopping, and the differences between the book
shopping and browsing periods were striking. There were several students clustered around one area, three girls and one boy. The girls were clustered around the same bin, and I noticed that one of them selected a *Geronimo Stilton* (Stilton, 2004) text from the “Level T” bin.

What struck me was that during the book shopping, students were expected to select books quietly, calmly, and within their level only, or occasionally within a span of levels (Allington, 2011; Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007). Because book shopping happened during instructional time, students were not allowed to disrupt others while doing so. This was quite different than the browsing periods in the library—where students dashed to look at books, to save the space where they hoped to sit, and to congregate with their friends. Book shopping in the classroom practically, then, did not have the level of movement or noise that the browsing periods have had because classroom teachers were expected to complete assessments in a timely manner and demonstrate student progress.

Although browsing sessions, as facilitated by both Amanda and Deborah, did offer choice and were distinct from book shopping in classrooms, the manner in which browsing was approached varied between the two constructions, demonstrating how people (bodies and beliefs) produce a space. Deborah, for example, was concerned with ensuring that students selected books that were appropriate. During a library session on February 1st, 2017, for example, Deborah brought to students’ attention that they were consistently selecting joke books. She said:

> Everyone just takes the joke books. Nobody take them today. Let’s see by March if you can read all the other ones… along the shelves. You need to read three or more. Take them out, and bring them back. You should be reading the books, not taking the joke books. (2/1/2017 FN, p. 4)
Later during the period, she told me that she planned to get certificates for students who read a certain number of books. Deborah here demonstrated her value of reading volume and appropriate content, positioning the library as a space that should support traditional literacy learning. For James, however, this had clear implications. James, in my first interview with him (11/13/2016 INT, p. 3), mentioned how much he loved the joke books. After this incident in the library, I asked him what he thought about not being able to select joke books anymore. He said, “I wanted to read the Valentine’s Day joke books yesterday…” (2/2/2017 INT, p. 6). When I then asked what he thought about them being off-limits, he responded, “I thought that… that I would choose another book” (2/2/2017 INT, p. 6).

This decision by Deborah to monitor book choice—to organize access to Firstspace materials—signified her conception of the library as a space that had guidelines for children in terms of reading level and content. For example, on December 13th, 2016, I observed a browsing period where Deborah informed a student that the book they selected was not on their level, because they were only in first grade. A few minutes later, I again heard her ask a student, “what level are you on?” (12/13/2016 FN, p. 2). Months later, on April 27th, 2017, Deborah again prompted students to “pick books on your level” (4/27/2017 Map). The way that Deborah and Amanda perceived their own role in the library had implications for what students were encouraged, and sometimes permitted, to do. It both opened and closed different conceptions of Secondspace for students. Both Amanda and Deborah shifted the space, just as their identities were constructed from the various positions that they had taken up over time and their own beliefs about literacy (Moje & Luke, 2009).
Amanda took a slightly different approach to the way that she monitored book choice in the library, adamant that it should not be a leveled space. In specifically discussing the differences between book shopping in the classroom and the way that browsing was structured in the library, Amanda responded with the following:

The fact that in the library, they can read together and they don’t necessarily have to read with their reading partner, right? Browsing days and check out days, you’re not only looking for books but you can sit and read and you can sit and read with whoever you want. You can stop reading with whoever you want and go and read with somebody else, and then you can stop. You know what I mean? Again, I don’t know would that be all tied into choice, just choice in general, choice in what you read, how you read, where you sit because they’re not assigned places. You know what I mean? (12/9/2016 INT, p. 9)

Amanda, positioning the library as a space of choice, stated that “I think all that put together is big, you know?” (12/9/2016 INT, p. 9). That is, the library was intended to be a space that offered choice (New York City School Library System, n.d.) and didn’t monitor the types of texts that students read. Deborah, on the other hand, viewed her role slightly different, and therefore, the space was enacted differently in the daily browsing sessions. Despite the Firstspace materials being consistent, the discursive spaces that were afforded to students shifted across space, time, and individual construction of space. Therefore, the way that book choice was embedded in the library was fluid and largely dependent on who was making those decisions, as well as the extent to which the students, who also had agency, adhered to these directives. Even more so, those decisions were constructed within larger schooled discourses about what counted as reading, what students should be reading, and what made someone a reader. The library was not a container (Leander et al., 2010) where these discourses were isolated, but it was networked to the other school spaces in which these larger discourses circulated. The
library continued to a space of possibility—of text selection, of what literacy was, and who could be marked as literate. However, this was complicated.

**Discourses of Leveling Seep into the Library**

Part of what made the library a complex space was that it is not only the librarian who determined what was appropriate or privileged for students to read. Whether Amanda or Deborah invited reading levels or notions of reading proficiency into the library, they seeped in regardless, because the circulating discourses entered in to less official school spaces (Dyson, 1993).

One way that students brought in traditional ways to gauge proficiency was through the reading levels that City Partnership School’s teachers used to ensure that students were reading books at their level. Reading levels at City Partnership School were assigned by assessing all students multiple times per year. The assessment determined what level of text students could read with independence (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) and directed students to select books within that level. To administer this assessment, teachers listened to students read orally. The assessment considered multiple criteria of “being a reader” including the text structure, print and illustrations, complexity of topics, and use of vocabulary (Kontovourki, 2012). Based on their results, students were given the choice about which text to select within a particular level, however the choice was managed as they were not given free rein to select across levels. As Kontovourki (2012) described, leveled texts were an important element of schooled literacy, although have often not been included in debates around assessments in schools. In libraries, this was even more pronounced, as libraries themselves were not leveled in this manner.
Mark traversed a great amount of space during typical library sessions, “browsing” in the truest sense of the word. Mark, in these browsing sessions, relied heavily on the notion of reading levels to help determine what he could read, and this often drove his book choices. On January 25th, 2017 (see Figure 10), Mark exhibited abandoning of books until he found something that he was successful with. In addition, he removed himself to go to the bathroom, which was consistent with other instances of removing himself from the library (e.g. going to the nurse). During this session, Mark began by reading *Knuffle Bunny* (Willems, 2004) out loud to me. Next, he brought *Danny and the Dinosaur* (Hoff, 1958) to me, saying “I can read this, it’s a first-grade book!” (1/25/2017 Map). He moved across the room a couple minutes later to where Nikki and I were sitting. He held up a book, and asked Nikki if she could read it. She replied with, “Yeah, I’m a level J,” and Mark replied with, “Well, I’m a level D.” A few minutes after that, he climbed behind a shelf. Later, the students were called to line up and he stood in line with his selected book (1/25/2017 Map). Again, there was an emphasis on levels and “proving” what he could read. As with Nikki and other students at City Partnership School, reading levels were a way in which “being a reader” was defined. For that reason, Mark emphasized his reading level often. Being a reader was anchored around literally decoding the text. While there was evidence elsewhere of Mark talking with his peers and browsing book covers (e.g. 11/9/2016, 12/13/2016, 1/10/2017, 1/25/2017, 2/8/2017), his fixation on reading levels took precedent. To Mark and Nikki, being a reader was not divorced from the reading level to which you were assigned. Like third grader Bill in Kontovourki’s (2012) analysis, both Mark and Nikki demonstrated their interest in progressing through reading levels, boasting about which level they had “attained.”
As Mark and Nikki utilized social space and crafted identities in the library, it became evident that the larger school institution was still present in each interaction. Leander (2002) argues that “in school settings, achievements of identity are not only shaped at the level of any identity group but are also laminated with the construction of the school space-as-institution” (p. 239). Even in a space like the library that was (in theory) free from notions of reading levels, it was still situated within the larger school and those ideas and values permeated the space. Both Mark and Nikki relied heavily on reading levels as a tangible way to “mark” someone as successful or not. While reading levels came up with Carla and James, it was not to the same extent as in my conversations with Nikki and Mark. Even though the library didn’t use or refer to levels in the same ways as the classrooms at City Partnership School, Mark and Nikki actively brought the notion of reading levels into the library, simultaneously bringing classroom literacy ideologies and discourses (Secondspace discourses) with them as they entered the
space. The result was a complex and contested idea of what literacy in the library meant in practice, as students navigated the tensions between fluid browsing and the constraints of reading levels. As I describe below, these dominant ideologies about reading levels have implications for student identities as readers and writers. Moje (2004, in Leander & Sheehy) reminds us that identity, ideology, and ways of thinking about literacy cannot be considered apart from space. Therefore, the intersection of reading levels and the library space provided me with a unique time-space (Leander & Sheehy, 2004) with which to examine Nikki and Mark.

**Identities as informed by reading levels.** Because Mark and Nikki made attempts to regulate the reading levels of each other, they played a significant role in producing reading identities for one another (in concert with the librarian, other students, and materials). For Nikki, having a “high” reading level was a tangible marker of success, one that she mentioned frequently, and with pride. For example, even as I probed Nikki about what makes a strong reader, she brought up reading levels. During my second interview with her (11/17/2016 INT, pp. 5-6) this very notion came up.

Alyson: I’m wondering… What does a good reader do in the library, do you think?
Nikki: Umm… reading books? And loves sitting down.
Alyson: And loves sitting down? And what about in your classroom? What does a good reader do in your classroom?
Nikki: Well, we have leveled books…
Alyson: Mmm hmm.
Nikki: Level A is the easiest, and level Z is the hardest.
Alyson: So, does being a good reader in the classroom have something to do with levels?
Nikki: Yeah, I’m on level I.
Alyson: Whoa… So, are you a good reader in the classroom?
Nikki: Yeah!
Alyson: What makes you a good reader in the classroom?
Nikki: I’m the highest level.
For Nikki, her performance of schooled literacy, and her high reading level, positioned her with power. The reading level that she obtained had become part of her “identity kit” (Gee, 1989) and a tangible one at that, as reading levels had become often physical markers (on books, folders, and other material). Like Mark, Nikki equated being a reader with sitting down and reading a book (dominant notions of what it means to be a reader). In fact, the image that she drew at the beginning of this interview pictured multiple children smiling in the library, with one student having a speech bubble that said, “I love books!” (see Figure 11). Here, Nikki demonstrated the tensions between different stances toward reading, a cognitive, linear progression as measured by reading levels and yet the desire to enjoy reading all at the same time. These discourses were not mutually exclusive, but operated in tandem, circulating constantly though at times, affording more power to one over the other.

![Figure 11. Picture of the library from Nikki’s interview (11/17/2016).](image)

Despite these tensions, I considered ways in which the literacy practices of “other spaces” may have fostered opportunities for students to engage in literacy in various
ways. For Mark, the library could offer a space where he could be a different type of reader. While he was marked as “low” in the classroom by nature of his independent reading level, perhaps the fluidity of the library allowed him to interact more playfully and to read on his own terms. Mark wanted desperately to be a reader, and his behaviors were a clear reflection of that. When he wandered in ways that appeared aimless, I believe he was actually constructing a readerly identity. On December 13th, 2016, I traced Mark’s movements across a browsing period. He moved from the bench, to the nurse, to multiple bookshelves, traversing a great amount of space in the process (12/13/2016 Map). Similarly, on January 10th, 2017, during a browsing period previously described, Mark selected an Elephant and Piggie book and read it on his own. This book he stuck with, and even walked to the bin as he read it to ensure that he finished the book before it was time to leave the library (1/10/2017 Map).

This traversing space, and conflicted identity positions that he took up, created a lamination of his past, present, and future literacy engagements (Moje & Luke, 2009). Because Nikki—and others—made it clear that he was not a successful reader in the conventional sense, Mark had a conflicted identity. That is, he didn’t select books based on anything other than reading level. Mark also marked himself as a particular kind of reader—a first grade reader—because he could read a “first grade book” (1/25/2017 Map). In my last interview with Mark and Nikki, they argued about what level Mark was, and therefore, what kind of reader he was (2/16/2017 INT, p. 4), as they reproduced dominant notions of what made a reader successful:

Mark: I can read anything.
Nikki: No, you can’t! (Quietly) He’s a level A.
Alyson: Nikki, just him.
Mark (to Nikki): I’m not a level A. I’m a level C.
Alyson: But what…?
Nikki: I’m a level J.
Mark: I’m a level D!
Alyson (to Nikki): Can you let him finish? (To Mark) What are you doing in this picture that makes you a good reader?
Mark: Because I’m a level H.
Nikki: You’re not a level H.
Alyson: But what are you doing in this picture?
Mark: Umm, grabbing a book.
Alyson: What kind of book?
Mark: Well, I’m a level O.
Nikki: No you’re not.
Alyson (to Mark): Just ignore [her].
Nikki: He’s a level C.
Mark: No, I’m not! I’m a level D.

To Nikki and Mark, being a reader could be measured, and it was indeed measured through reading levels (though there are certainly other ways that this is done in schools—pages read, books read, etc.). In the above interview, Nikki regulated who Mark was as a reader, and it was based on his reading level. This discursive construction, of course, mattered in how Mark viewed himself. Nikki, here and elsewhere, actively took up the discourse of leveling to regulate what Mark could read, in effect positioning herself as having a higher ability than Mark. Wohlwend (2007) argues, “however, we may not be taking into account the potentially deleterious effects of children’s agentic behavior” (p. 74). While Nikki exercised her agency in the ways that she regulated Mark, she also demonstrated the ways in which she was disciplined by the discourses of schooled literacy, or the Secondspace discourses that circulated and re-circulated throughout the space. These discourses resulted in some students having more or less status, and while both children bought into the schooled literacy discourses, Mark was most implicated. Mark read the social space of the library and the way that he was
positioned within it (Zacher, 2009), and worked to position himself with more power (e.g. to display those behaviors that might compensate for his reading level).

A few lines later in this same interview (2/16/2017 INT, p. 5) when asked if he liked Elephant and Piggie books, Mark replied “I can read them. They’re a level E. No, those are level E’s.” Kontovourki (2012) contends, “seen in this way, practices like leveling can be understood both as products of power and as permeated by power, which students take up or resist but whose stakes are nevertheless high” (p. 128). Mark both took up the notion of his reading level, and yet at the same time he resisted being constrained to a level, bolstering his level with each statement that he made during this excerpt. Mark demonstrated, through these shifts, that discursive space was not unitary. There was space for inquiry and choice in texts, and yet there was also space where Mark’s identity as a reader was increasingly implicated by assessment-based discourses. Situated within the contested space of the library, Mark showed the complexities of his readerly identity.

Although not marked as a proficient reader in the way that Nikki was, Mark garnered social capital in the sense that he was praised for his behaviors—the reading strategies and attitudes that he employed began to compensate for his struggle to decode the texts. As a social being in the classroom, Mark had mobility across different spaces. While reading levels were an important and tangible marker of reading proficiency, they were not the only way to mark a student as a good reader. For example, his earning of tickets on February 8th, 2016, demonstrated the validation that he often received for adhering to expected practices.
These interview excerpts demonstrate how powerful the notion of reading levels was, and the regulatory power that reading levels wield, even within spaces where reading levels were not the norm. In fact, the reading levels that were assigned to students became part of the readerly identity that students constructed. The levels regulated what students thought they could read and the materials that they selected (Kontovourki, 2012), even in a space like the library. Just as Wohlwend (2007) analyzed the ways in which the girls’ claims as injured positioned Kevin as an offender and themselves as victims, Nikki’s claims about Mark’s reading level actively continued to position herself as a strong reader and him as a weaker reader. Nikki “impinged on the identity claims of others” (Zacher, 2009, p. 276) in the continual back-and-forth about reading levels, using Mark’s position and boasting about her own in relation to it. In doing so, she garnered more power and positioned Mark as less powerful than her. However, Dyson (1993) reminded us that these social stances were not static and were constantly negotiated. Perhaps this is ultimately why Nikki and Mark talked about reading levels often, as Nikki’s regulation of Mark as a reader helped to preserve a social balance between the two of them. Nonetheless, the discourses around reading levels, assessment, and ability were networked from the classroom to other school spaces, shaping readerly identities as they were constructed across a collection of school spaces.

**Discourses of Reading Strategies Networked Across Space**

Despite its flexibility, the library resembled the classroom in that traditional discourses around reading were present and worked to shape the space through their continual recirculation. Like many others, to Carla, being a reader was often tied to autonomous and skills-based notions (Street & Street, 1995) about what reading was,
where reading was primarily about decoding the word and not giving up when a word is
difficult. The different engagements that Carla did take up, that might contrast with these
notions, will be discussed in the chapter that follows. In fact, when discussing what it
meant to be a reader in the library, all four children named reading strategies and
behaviors emphasized across multiple school spaces, where the layering of these
strategies, discourses, and behaviors produced a palimpsest of a complex lived space
(Huyssen, 2003). What was defined as reading in their classrooms and other school
spaces permeated the library (sometimes temporarily and sometimes permanently)—the
library wasn’t exempt from assessment discourses because it was inherently networked to
the other spaces. However, the students were also not exempt from assessment
discourses, as over time, they internalized these discourses. As they moved in and out of
the library, so did the discourses about what counted as reading. As Soja (1996) explains,
this is one reason why attending to Thirdspace cracks is essential, as without those
cracks, discourses that can produce or resist more equitable spaces go unchallenged.
These Thirdspace interruptions will be explored in greater depth in the chapter that
follows.

Carla was someone who loved books and had a wide range of interests in texts,
and therefore, had an “ideal” orientation toward reading, one that fit with the expectations
of schooling. When asked, Carla discussed being a reader as following the expectations,
strategies, and attitudes/behaviors that she had been taught in school. Kontovourki (2012)
argues that “the body may be read as a text that is written upon and socially (re)produced
according to the particular practices and discourses to which it has been exposed” (p. 5).
Carla did such by reproducing particular ways of “being” in the library, disciplining her
body and taking up the same language, that she had learned in her classroom and across the school context. She noted that, “a good reader… they read in their heads,” a good reader “doesn’t give up on words,” and “it’s like they try their best? It’s kinda like they don’t give up”? (12/8/2016 INT, p. 5). When I probed Carla about what it meant to be a good reader across the classroom and library, she mentioned “they look at the picture” to help them figure out the word. When I asked who could be a good reader in the library and classroom, Carla answered “anybody” and giggled (12/8/2016 INT, p. 6).

In her response, Carla seemed to find my question humorous and unnecessary, as she stated matter-of-factly that it was possible for anyone to be a reader. Simultaneously, Carla effectively named strategies that she had been taught in the classroom as what “a good reader” did and began illustrating the kind of person who embodied a reader (Gee, 2005). However, she also utilized and circulated the discourse that everyone can be a reader, something that was emphasized within the context of City Partnership School, as well as more broadly in the balanced literacy approach and curriculum that City Partnership School adopted (Calkins, 2015).

In addition to her statements about what constituted a good reader were the behaviors that Carla exhibited that indicated these beliefs. For example, there were many instances of Carla sitting still as directed, both across the various spaces in the library as well as in the classroom. For example, on November 10th, 2016, during the read-aloud Carla exhibited the behaviors of a model student, demonstrating her understanding of the expectations of a proficient reader (Siegel, Kontovourki, Schmier, & Enriquez, 2008). Regardless of whether these were the expectations of this space, which they were not, Carla naturally embodied them as a product of internalizing schooled literacy discourses.
Her performance as a reader was therefore reflective of the larger identity practices that laminated (Moje & Luke, 2009) over time to make these ways of “being a reader” normalized.

James was also marked by his classroom teacher, by Deborah, and by his peers as a proficient reader, both by nature of his reading level as well as his general demeanor as a good student. During my second interview with James, I asked him to draw a picture of the library (see Figure 12), and like Carla, he began by drawing different types of books. As he did so, saying that he was making the books up as he went, I asked him how he decided what to add. He responded that “my brain helped me” (12/15/2016 INT, p. 2).

![Figure 12. James’ drawing of the library (12/15/2016).](image)

Like Carla, James positioned reading as the cornerstone of his library experience, although gave himself permission to imagine the possibilities of new kinds of books, and books that he had yet to explore. However, his experience in the library was always deeply connected to books (the materials) and rooted in the enjoyment (the social spaces)
that he found with these books. In my first interview with James, he used language such as “the library has, also, books that I never read” and “I haven’t looked at all of the books” to approach the library as a space rich with possibility for exploring new topics and new texts. However, he simultaneously used language such as “my brain helped me” to discuss reading in a way that was directly linked to learning, a more dominant way of positioning reading and literacy. While the library may offer more freedom of exploration, it was never divorced from a schooled definition of reading as a cognitive skill that individual readers make sense of in their heads, as opposed to a social process (Street, 2005). It was a space that could never get outside of these discourses—it was always inextricably connected to them. Later in the conversation (12/15/2016 INT, p. 4), as James continued to add to his picture, I asked James about what it meant to be a good reader:

James: Because if they don’t know how to read the words, they can look at the pictures.
Alyson: And that will help them? What else does a good reader do in the library? How about one more thing.
James: [adds “they imagine the book” to drawing]
Alyson: Nice. And what about in the classroom? When you think about a good reader in the classroom, do they do these same things? Do they do anything that’s different?
James: Sometimes they imagine the book, and sometimes they also look at the pictures.
Alyson: Do they do anything else in the classroom that maybe they don’t do in the library?
James: [adds “they read with friends” to drawing]
Alyson: So, in the classroom they read with friends? Nice. My next question is, who can be a good reader in the library?
James: All my friends.
Alyson: Can anybody be a good reader in the library?
James: Everyone in the school.

James named strategies—look at the pictures, imagine the book, and read with friends—consistent with the approach to reading taught in his classroom (Calkins, 2015).
Similarly, he marked all friends and students as “good readers,” though some distinction was made between his friends and the entire school. While this was constructed by James, my own positionality and framing of the question equally helped to construct this meaning for James, demonstrating the ways in which I inherently also adhere to schooled literacy discourses, as they are powerful forces. To James, the library was a democratic space that was open to everyone. He named cognitive notions of literacy and schooled literacy behaviors, and yet also discussed reading as something that was open for everyone to take pleasure in. Perhaps this was because his own experiences have been that the library offered more freedom to read the books of his choice—Mo Willems—than the classroom, where he was expected to read his “just right” books as a common part of schooled literacy practices (Kontovourki, 2012). During my first interview with James, he said that he didn’t get to pick Mo Willems books in the classroom because “I’m a higher level than some people” (11/3/2016 INT, p. 6), whereas the library conversely offered him this choice. This was complicated, of course, by the notion that books were at times “off-limits” and more heavily regulated, such as the joke books (2/2/2017 Map).

Mark, despite moving around the library with ease while browsing for books until he found one to linger in longer, was still well aware of the literacy behaviors and practices that were intimately tied to being a “good reader.” Because Mark was not perceived as proficient in the way that Carla and James were, he was even more conscious of these practices. I asked Mark what he would choose to read if he could read anything, and he responded: “I would pick one… I would read some again. And, I would buy one more book. If I don’t know one, I should do it tomorrow. And if I do know it, I
will still read it again, because it’s my first time” (10/13/2016 INT, p. 8). Regardless of where he was, Mark conceptualized reading in a traditional way. During the same interview, I asked him if he liked reading, to which he replied he did because “they show me the letters” and when prompted, elaborated with, “I learn letters because the book… The book, umm, we spell out the words. And we listen to the sounds of the words” (10/13/2016 INT, p. 8).

To Mark then, the library was a place for reading, and reading was learning to sound out the words and to read a high volume of reading. This was unsurprising given Mark’s tendency to rely on cognitive notions of reading that further a linear trajectory of autonomous skills that then lead to an accumulation of “reading,” despite sociocultural stances to literacy that resist these definitions (Luke, 2012; Street, 2005). Given my status as an adult researcher working with Mark, and my likely positioning as a teacher figure, I read Mark’s statements as listing, therefore recirculating, many of the ideas that he had been taught about what reading is. In other words, he said what he thought I wanted to hear. This, of course, requires continual reflection on my role as a researcher, and the ways in which I—as a teacher figure—subconsciously took up notions of schooled literacy practices and reinforced the very responses that Mark produced (Kontovourki, 2012). I, too, was an active agent in shaping and producing the space. I brought these discourses and ideologies with me, just as librarians and students did. While I didn’t alter the physical or material space, my body and my presence worked to produce and reproduce it.

In the image below (see Figure 13), where I invited Mark to draw the library, he first drew the clock (in black) on the wall, bookshelves (in pink and gray), and keyboards
(in blue) stacked on top of a shelf. When prompted to draw what it looks like to read in the library, Mark drew himself holding two books in the bottom right corner (see Figure 13). When asked about what it means to read in the library, Mark named the things that he had been taught (reading hard books, reading a lot, re-reading) and positioned himself as someone who was growing in his reading levels (“I’ve been to level C”). When I probed Mark on what would happen if he did the reading activities that he had been taught, he said, “you can get more learning in your head and you can get writing more done” (11/10/2016, pp. 3-4).

For Mark, adopting and displaying both the schooled literacy practices that were valued in the library (listening to read-alouds, browsing and reading quietly, and selecting the books deemed appropriate), as well as demonstrating pleasure in reading, was essential to positioning himself as a strong reader. By embodying these practices, Mark attempted to visibly engage with texts in the ways that schools decide (Enriquez, 2014),
demonstrating the immense regulatory power of schooled literacies. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) remind us that one’s identity and social positioning within cultural institutions, like schools, influences the extent to which individuals ascribe to the values promoted by the institution. For Mark, who wielded less power as a conventional reader, the dominant values of literacy, and behaviors that embody these values, were foregrounded. In other words, he actively took up these discourses, and was often positively reinforced by doing so. Equity matters in this work, as Mark was not afforded the same mobilities—the same fluid practices—as his peers who were marked as more proficient.

The library browsing sessions offered pockets of choice and fluid practices, where students weren’t necessarily expected to have the same literacy experience. For that reason, Mark had some freedom to browse, more so than in the classroom where he wasn’t expected to only read on his level. However, Mark, Carla, and James all positioned the library as “school,” where these pockets of more fluid practices were situated within larger notions about what literacy looked like (reading a book cover to cover, and using strategies to figure out words), and were often fleeting. The library was a space that was inherently networked to various other spaces and discourses within the school.

**Conclusion: Library as a Space of Contradiction**

For many students, the library was a space of play, and yet at other times, this play was closed down. This play will be detailed more fully in the chapter that follows. Deborah exercised agency in the space, leading and facilitating read-alouds and
prompting students to engage in literacy in various ways. At other times, students took
over and used the space in the ways that allowed them to construct social spheres with
more playful tendencies. For some, like Nikki, this meant individual spaces to read. For
others, this was highly social and playful. Regardless, the library shifted across these
times and events, trading and shifting power simultaneously. The library was a space
where individuals constructed spaces for themselves, and simultaneously constructed
identities in the process. However, “a social stance, though, can only be negotiated, not
assumed. That is, when language users position themselves in a certain social place, they
also negotiate the positions of others” (Dyson, 1993, p. 58). For James, the way that he
socially positioned himself was contingent on those around him.

Ultimately the library was an “other space” (Foucault, 1986), distinct from the
classroom space and yet contingent on the classroom space all at the same time. Because
the library still operated within the larger school institution, the constraints on schools
permeated all school spaces, including the library. As Schmidt (2017) contends, borders
are markers of difference. While the library may be a space where more choice, play, and
inquiries are possible, even these moments are fleeting. The next chapter of this
dissertation will explore these themes through the interactions between my focal students,
their relationships with one another, and their relationships with the library space. In the
chapter that follows, I will highlight the ways in which these moments are produced even
within the larger accountability practices.
Chapter V

FLUIDITY WITHIN A CONTESTED SPACE

*Alyson:* “Do you ever play with your books?”

*Carla:* “Sometimes, so like, I don’t throw them around because that wouldn’t be respectful. I just like, try to be funny with them. Like, ‘hello, I’m a monster!’” (motions book opening like a mouth) (2/3/2017 interview with Carla, p. 4)

In the quote above, Carla demonstrated an inherent tension that she feels in the library—the need to be a respectful and diligent reader, and the youthful desire to play. It is this tension that I explore in this analysis chapter. The previous chapter explored the library as a networked space, one that was malleable and often shifted according to broader institutional pressures. These networks constructed the library as a liminal space that morphed in response to pressures and yet simultaneously retained principles of choice and inquiry. Often, the moments of possibility where students did take up notions of choice, and demonstrated agency therein, occurred in the Thirdspace “cracks” (Soja, 1996), where the normalized pattern of library sessions were disrupted, even if momentarily.

The library was not a container, rather it was situated within the larger school, and those larger discourses flowed in (and out) of the library space (Leander et al., 2010). Sarah Pink (2008) has argued: “ethnographic places are not simply made in the moments that they are lived. Rather, they are crafted over longer periods of interaction and intellectual activity” (p. 190). In this case study of the library, I positioned the library as constructed over multiple moments in time and through interaction with multiple individuals. Therefore, while I have argued that the library at City Partnership School
was largely an extension of the classroom, I also documented pockets of more fluid literacy practices and possibility that opened and closed, where students constructed a different a different kind of space, one that was often unexpected. Like the library, these pockets, too, were contingent rather than permanent openings.

Soja (1996) argues that theorizing the Thirdspace must be left deliberately open; “we must always be moving on to new possibilities and places” (p. 82). The very notion of Soja’s (1996) Thirdspace arises from the unexpected. Other scholars in the fields of language and literacy (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) have similarly framed Thirdspace as the intersection of official and unofficial spaces. Nonetheless, it was a critical and flexible site of continual change and was where discourses of power became concretized into practice. To think spatially means to move beyond the concrete towards recognizing spaces as also conceived (Leander et al., 2010; Soja, 1996) and having the ability to shape what is seen as possible as an interrelation of materials, bodies, and language. To think highlight different aspects of discursive space, then, I seek to privilege Thirdspace because of its potential to critique and re-imagine the possibilities of space, in larger efforts to shed light on how space produces and reproduces injustice (Soja, 1996).

As in the previous chapter, to examine literacy practices across space, I took up the artifacts that I had from this dissertation study (interview transcripts, spatial maps, and student-created products) and examined them both as products that narrated entire literacy events (Jones et al., 2016), as well as looked at individual parts of the artifact. As in the previous chapter, I took up “hacking” (Schmidt, 2017) as an analytical method, where I pulled apart moments and artifacts, in efforts to reconsider potential meanings through the lens of disruption. Schmidt (2017) also hacks across artifacts, in that she
takes themes that seem common and looks across those individual moments. In this chapter, I traced instances of Thirdspace, which often took the forms of student play and their traversing of space, in order to identify and construct larger patterns across themes, individual students, and in library sessions. In doing so, I sought to find the tensions and complexity across moments where students exhibited agency, engaged in play, and ultimately produced different kinds of discursive space.

Importantly, I position all focal students as agentic, who—quite expertly—managed and constructed social relationships (Dyson, 1993) across time and space as these pockets of more fluid literacy practices opened, closed, and morphed. Studying space also necessitates studying how individuals interact with one another in the space (Leander, 2002). Therefore, in this chapter, I looked particularly at the spaces of possibility that emerged in the library.

**Library as Possibility: “The Library Isn’t a Leveled Space”**

The library maintained its own unique discursive space and culture that could not be reduced to a mirroring of classroom reading practices. Like the classroom, the library was not a static room contained within four walls, but was produced by distinct materials, energies, resources, information flows, as well as individuals and the histories that they brought (Leander et al., 2010). Situated within a larger institution held accountable for student outcomes, and yet not directly responsible for them, the library was left open to possibility yet remained fraught with contractions. This was evident right from the beginning of the school year, as Amanda began to welcome new students.
To illustrate the ethos of the school library during a particular slice of time, I spatially narrate one event (Jones et al., 2016) where more fluid practices circulated. On September 22nd, 2016 the students participated in browsing for the first time, illuminating how this event differed from book selection in the classroom. One student ran over to a favorite area, the “spinny” shelf, and shouted excitedly, “these books are so cool!” Six students sat quietly on the bench, each reading their own book. Two girls shared an Elephant and Piggie book on the rug. Amanda looked at them, asking, “are you taking turns being Elephant and Piggie?” with a smile on her face. The students looked up, cheering “yeah!” (9/22/2016 FN, p. 5-6) as the room filled with voices. Overall, students moved around the space with ease. Another student, for example, approached the two reading Elephant and Piggie to read them a joke aloud from her joke book. Other students milled around the spinny shelf looking at books. Two other students sat in the comfy chair together, reading their own books (a Lego book, and a fairytale) and yet pausing periodically to discuss with one another in hushed tones. During this short event, the speeds, rhythms, and frequencies of movement changed and varied (some students ran and shouted with excitement, while others read quietly) both across the Firstspace and Secondspace, as students engaged with available materials and with one another in a dialectical manner. The students in this event weren’t merely situated passively in the space but created different energy flows through their movement and language practices.

As I walked around, taking notes, Amanda approached me, mentioning how much she loved to have the students browse. She said that if it were up her, she would have students browse the entire time, hinting at the flexibility that she had in the space, but only to a certain extent. I, too, noticed the sense of the space that oriented students
towards specific ways of engaging with texts (Jones et al., 2016), where Amanda had to do little management. She agreed, noting that the students “need this time” (9/22/2016 FN, p. 6). This sentiment was echoed months later, when Amanda reflected back on her time in the library after she was moved back into the position of classroom teacher, when she gave students the time to do what they wanted. We discussed the need for students to just “be kids,” and she elaborated:

I even had Legos, wait, I had Legos. They would build, right? If you wanted to say, ‘Alright. How can we take that and make it so every area is academic?’ I’m sure I could have. I’m sure I could have put a task card with the Legos, where it said, after you create something, write a piece about it, or write a story that goes with the, you know… I’m sure there’s a way to tie all of this into academics. I also like the idea of letting kids be kids. After six hours and 20 minutes of a day of having to be students, that it’s okay. They’re not going to lose intelligence because they got to play for 40 minutes or 30 minutes, because by the time they get set up it was half an hour of their day, once a week, or once every two weeks. You know what I mean? (12/9/2016 INT, p. 11)

Amanda then brought up how a fourth-grade teacher had asked her to help a student pick books on his “level,” and she seemed conflicted by this. Amanda explained to the teacher that she didn’t have the books in the library leveled. She also explained that she wanted the library to be a space where students deliberately did not read on their levels—instead, she noted that she believed students should have choice in the library. Selecting an easier book that they loved, for instance, Amanda stated was equally as powerful for students as reading one on their level, as they were expected to do in the classroom. These sentiments about what students should read were political (Janks, 2009), reflecting Amanda’s larger beliefs and priorities about what she counted as literacy, and what role the library might play in supporting students’ literacy engagements. While the library physically wasn’t leveled, this statement conveyed much larger ideological and political notions about the possibilities that the space held, and yet
did not hold (Jones et al., 2016). While the physical material—the Firstspace—mattered, it was larger notions of access to the materials that produced more equitable space. While the library could never be completely removed from the assessment discourses, Amanda made it clear that to others that the library could not be reduced to a classroom.

During this same event, the first session where students were invited to browse, the fluidity of the library space unfolded right before our eyes. As evidenced by the movements mapped in my fieldnotes (see Figure 14), early in the browsing period students congregated around the bookshelves, making selections. As time progressed, students engaged in much more movement, leaving groups of peers to join others, and traversing the library space to select new books. For example, a student ran up to Amanda and I, holding *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2007), exclaiming, “this is words and comics!” Importantly, this student was permitted to do this, and not

*Figure 14. Map from the first browsing period (9/22/2016).*
admonished for running or shouting, as the space was left open to exploration. A group of boys looked at Lego books, and more boys soon joined in, using their literacy practices to negotiate social relationships. Other students sat in the other comfy chair, reading.

Amanda looked through the bin of Elephant and Piggie books, held one up and said, “I don’t know this book!” She began reading it to two girls who stood next to her. Soon, more students joined in until Amanda had a cluster of students around her (see Figure 14) and the Mo Willems book bin. Other students periodically came up to Amanda and showed her things in the books they were reading, to which she listened and responded.

Beyond engagement with the physical texts, Amanda had worked to construct a library where students had flexibility of choice, where they were permitted to read and socialize at leisure. She did this through available materials, arrangement of the physical room, but also in how she set the tone for movement, noise, and bodies—the larger social context produced in part from the physical arrangements (Jones et al., 2016). All these visible choices conveyed her beliefs about reading, and ultimately, the purpose of libraries. It was a pleasant, warm, and friendly place in these moments, and in many that followed.

The ability of students to engage in these movements, encouraged by Amanda’s passion for children’s literature, helped to construct a browsing session that buzzed with children’s murmurings, relaxed movement, and fun. While students were permitted and even encouraged to move, in tracing these movements, the spaces within the library that are favored by students began to emerge (Schmidt, 2017). Namely, these were the comfortable places to read, and the spaces with the popular books—the series displayed on the spinny shelf and the beloved Mo Willems shelves. This first browsing session set a
tone for the rest of the year, and I found myself looking forward to my visits. As such, my own positionality—as a researcher, as a teacher, as a reader—was ever-present in this work and must be continually examined (Peshkin, 1988), as my presence continually shifted the space and my interpretations of the space. Because I enjoy visits to the library in my personal and professional life, I often romanticized the library, particularly as it related and contrasted with other school spaces. These attitudes influenced my noticings and representations of the library, the study participants, and my own research experiences. I consistently sought to interrogate my “readings” of the library in light of these multiple positionings.

Selection of Books Shaping the Library

Each of my focal students expressed an enjoyment in choosing books in the library, some because of their favorite authors and others because of the possibilities afforded by a wider selection. Selecting books, nonetheless, was essential to the experience of the library. While book shopping in classrooms followed a relatively predictable structure, one where students read books within appropriate levels of complexity and received instruction, the library sessions were varied both in their structure (responses or browsing) and in their ethos.

For example, on February 1st, 2017, I observed James’ interactions with his peers, and with texts, during a browsing session. Notably, James chose to read only Elephant and Piggie books during this session, and he read many of them. When dismissed to browse, James selected one book, and read it to himself while sitting in the comfy chair. In fact, he read the book aloud, and did the voices for each character. He continued like this for about five minutes. When he finished with the first book, James switched it for a
different Elephant and Piggie book and did the same. Upon finishing the second text, he moved to the bench, where several of his peers were reading a different book with the same characters. James watched them for several minutes, though he didn’t say anything. Deborah, moving through the room, asked James where his book was, as he was standing with nothing in his hands. He then turned to the other students on the bench, asking “can I read that when you are done?” Shortly after, they handed James the book. He moved across the room, back near the comfy chair (although not in it, as another student was). Two students listened to James as he read aloud while performing the character voices. When he finished, he got another book, seemingly paying them no mind (2/1/2017 Map). James expertly used the time and space to engage with texts by his favorite author, and his desire to engage with these texts—Firstspace materials—often necessitated and brought on his movement (importantly, this was not the case for all students). Carla, on the other hand, performed less movement in many of the browsing sessions that I witnessed. On January 10th, 2017, for example, Carla read *Cat in the Hat* (Seuss, 1957) with a partner for about 15 minutes when seated on the bench, and moved only when called to line up, where she walked to the line, holding hands with her partner (1/10/2017 Map). While James moved freely, Carla often preferred to produce a calm and quiet social space in which to read. Both ways of being a reader in the library were accepted, as the social and discursive spaces produced were not unitary but allowed for multiple relations with text.

Interested not only in my own observations of how, what, and when students selected texts in the library, I conducted interviews with each focal student in efforts to understand how the students perceived their opportunities for text selection in the library.
In doing so, one clear realization stood out—that each child loved coming to the library to read books, though this manifested differently. The texts they loved, and their reasons varied, but the physical books nonetheless were part of what made the space special, as if offering them multiple ways to reimagine their identities in relation to the books. While the direct freedom from assessment, and shifting openness of the library, allowed for various types of engagements with texts, as I examine in this chapter, “love of books” still operated within traditional notions of reading which tend to see reading as decoding and interpreting print, despite advances in the field with multimodal texts (Bearne, 2005).

For some students, like Carla, the library offered a wide selection of old favorite books and new discoveries. Carla was a reader who performed in the ways that traditionally accepted and encouraged in the culture of schooling, very consistently displaying the behaviors taught and expected in school as she engaged with books, both individually and with her peers. Carla mentioned Mo Willems books (especially the pigeon books), Critter Club (Barkley, 2013), and Starring Grace (Hoffman, 2001) (10/27/2016 INT, p. 6) as current favorites. For James, the library was a space where he could revisit the books that he was passionate about, not necessarily desiring or needing to expand his interests. James, too, professed to “love reading”, and especially Mo Willems books. Each day over the course of my data collection, James selected Mo Willems books to read, and often acted out the dialogue so characteristic of these specific texts. While each of these students, then, demonstrated an emotional response to reading as they brought their own personal and social factors into the transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1969), this was revealed in different ways.
During an interview with Carla that I conducted on October 27th, 2016, I first asked her to take photographs of the library (see Figures 15 and 16) in efforts to understand which books and spaces in the library she gravitated towards and why. Of the five images that Carla took, two were of books that she expressed enjoyment in reading. By focusing in on the book titles, Carla positioned books as central to her library experience. That is, the library was the library in large part because of the Firstspace materiality, but also in the Secondspace discourses that became produced through the materiality, as Carla referenced below.

After reviewing the images that she took, I transcribed the following with Carla.

First, I asked Carla if she liked the library (she did) and why, to which she responded, “because it’s a nice, calm, and pleasant place” (10/27/2016 INT, p. 4). I probed her then to consider the differences between her classroom and the library:
Alyson: Now I’m wondering, what is different when you think about your classroom and the library? What’s different?
Carla: Uhh… well, my classroom doesn’t have this much books.
Alyson: Do you wish that they were more similar?
Carla: Uhh… yeah, cause I want a bigger room. And I want more books to read.
Alyson: Mmm…
Carla: Cause I really like reading. (10/27/2017 INT, p. 5)

Here, Carla described books as integral to her library experience, specifically “more books,” hinting at her desire to select what she reads from a collection—a collection that diverged from the bins of books in her classroom, from which she was assigned a level. She didn’t reference volume of reading here, but rather, reading as something that she wanted to do—it was driven by interest, not assessment. This sentiment was partially produced through her interaction with me, however, as my language as the researcher positioned the library as different than the classroom—an “other” space. However, Carla also constructs a narration of the space from her perspective, with language such as “nice, calm, and pleasant,” consistent with the quiet spaces to read that she often constructed on her own or with a partner while in the library.

Like Carla, James also loved coming to the library, and in fact, described having even more specific interests in texts than Carla. When I asked him about the library, he always turned to the books, speaking about specific authors (Mo Willems) and characters (Knuffle Bunny and Trixie) that he connected with. My work with James began by asking him to take photographs of the library and talk around those photographs (11/3/2016 INT). All five of the photographs that James took were of books, whereas Carla also documented the rug and smartboard. When asked why he took these particular pictures, he responded, “because I like it,” and “because I like Mo Willems books” (p. 2). When I commented that all of his pictures were of books, he said “because… I think
about what the books I picked” (p. 3). Like Carla, James characterized the library by the presence of books, and in particular, by the presence of specific books. By continuing to physically gravitate towards these texts, and making statements such as, “the library has so many books” (11/3/2016 INT, p. 4) and “the library has, also, books that I never read” (11/3/2016 INT, p. 5), James demonstrated the relationship between his socially-situated literacy practices and the physical and the material space. His engagements with the materiality of the library, and access to it, shaped the discourses that he took up.

I asked James what he saw as the difference between the library and classroom, and then opened up our conversation more broadly:

James: It’s different because the library has, also, books that I never read. And in the classroom, I have books that I always read.
Alyson: Why do you think that there are some books in the library that you don’t read?
James: Because I haven’t looked at all of the books. (11/3/2016 INT, p. 5)

Alyson: Is there anything else that you want to tell me, James? Before we finish?
James: I want to tell you that when I’m in the library, I always get to see Knuffle Bunny books, Mo Willems books, every kind of book.

Alyson: And what do you think about that?
James: I think about that… That I’m happy. (11/3/2016 INT, p. 8)

The library is something that James looked forward to because he got to engage with these texts as he pleased, whereas in the classroom he was encouraged to read more challenging texts (detailed in the previous chapter). In referencing Knuffle Bunny, Too (Willems, 2007) and Mo Willems, James positioned these texts as old friends that he looked forward to revisiting by choice. These multiple visits to Mo Willems were confirmed as I observed him spending months returning to Mo Willems texts and asking his peers to swap with him so that he could read them again. This was not only evident during the browsing period on February 1st, 2017 but others as well. For example, on November 10th, 2016 James again spent the browsing period reading Mo Willems books, and even play fought with another student over book (11/10/2016 Map).

These events, surrounding the Mo Willems texts, were not incidental, but part of James’ production of space—the space that he desired to produce in the library. In referencing “I always get to see Knuffle Bunny books” (11/3/2016 INT, p. 8), he made it clear that the library had a level of comfort or familiarity for him, because he “always” got to see these books. This comfort was remade each time he revisited the library and these texts. The material objects were a focal point for James, and therefore, integral to his experience as a reader in the library. Because James’ readerly identity was constructed across multiple spaces within the school, the library mattered as a space where he could engage with texts differently, affording him access to texts based solely on enjoyment. As we consider which students are encouraged to select books based on
interest, and which are most constrained by the discourses of reading levels, equity merits a place in this conversation.

Nikki was also a reader who was enthralled with books. Though she mentioned Mo Willems as one favorite author, Nikki’s affinity for books was more dispersed across authors and genres. Whereas other students in her class carved out social relationships during their browsing periods, leisurely reading and engaging with texts, Nikki seemed to be more solitary. Rather than roaming and picking up/abandoning books, she would often immediately choose somewhere to sit, and read books cover to cover before exchanging them. For example, January 11th, 2017, Nikki read two different *Fly Guy* (Arnold, 2006) books on her own as students around her browsed; similarly, she claimed the comfy chair quickly and read *Scaredy Squirrel* (Watt, 2008) on February 8th, 2017. During the browsing sessions on December 13th, 2016 and January 25th, 2017, Nikki read quietly for a sustained amount of time (over ten minutes).

Wanting to unpack Nikki’s literacy practices, during my first interview with her (10/20/2016), I asked if she liked the library and why, to which she responded “yeah. Because… I like to read Mo Willems books” (10/20/2016 INT, pp. 1-2). However, in addition to the texts themselves, other Firstspace objects and the physical organization of the objects also influenced the ways in which Nikki felt about the library. For example, Nikki not only loved to read Mo Willems books, but she preferred to read them on the comfy chairs. This pairing of the text with the environment, Firstspace notions, seemed significant to her. Both the materials in the library, and the arrangement of those materials, helped to produce a Secondspace in which Nikki could engage with the books that she pleased, in the way that she pleased.
Nikki noted the differences between the library and her classroom in our first interview (10/20/2016 INT, p. 3):

It’s that [in the classroom] you don’t have that much bookshelves. And we don’t have, like, lots of like a place to read and a place to sit. Well, we do have chairs. But, that place is for you to read, and we don’t have browsing time.

In her characterization, Nikki linked the material and embodied reading practices of the library to the books themselves. The way that Nikki engaged in the space, therefore, was shaped by the physical and social aspects of the library, but the social space was simultaneously shaped by her decisions and behaviors about how she might be a reader in the space. For example, the decision to sit in the comfy chair by herself during each library period was a choice constructed out of the materials available to Nikki, as well as her own desires for the space. The library was both a process of continual negotiation by Nikki and her peers, as they made and remade those choices, but it was also a product of those interactions (Leander & Sheehy, 2004). Nikki not only engaged in shaping the space around her by carving out moments of solitude in the comfy chairs or selecting different texts, but the space that she constructed had implications for other students as well. The multiple discursive spaces produced across library sessions were networked, as Nikki’s actions set other social interactions in motion. My analysis of Nikki, and other focal children, aims to “recognize children and youth as subjects who enact agency in creative ways as they figure out who they can and cannot be in different contexts” (Jones et al., 2016, p. 1152). Nikki’s claiming of particular texts or places to sit not only spoke to her own identity as a reader, but these practices also opened and closed opportunities for other students as they shaped and reshaped space together.
Each student demonstrated an affinity for, and comfort with, the school library, quickly citing their love of books. Carla and James, for example, foregrounded books in their images while Nikki discussed books as a cornerstone of the library. As Schmidt (2017) contends, any photograph speaks volumes about the photographer, who selects, and positions the camera in relation to the materials. In positioning particular books and places in the library as essential to their library experiences, each student made a statement about what he or she valued. In part, they also claimed who they were as readers in this space, as they hinted at what the space offered—an opportunity to read how and what they love.

**Sharing stories with one another.** Because Carla and James described their desire to share books with others, I posed the question to both (1/19/2017 INT) about their favorite part of library, and these were their responses (p. 8):

Carla: [Pauses] I like reading independently… because… Actually, I like reading to someone because then they get to hear my special story that I really like. And then I, I get to… then they can share their special story with me.
James: I like to read with friends…
Carla: Me too.
Alyson: You like to share your stories with them, and maybe hear new books?
James: And even people who feel like they don’t want to read these stories, and they want to have somebody else’s stories… and they just fight over… they can both read the stories together instead of one person reading the story.

Within these responses, a love for sharing books with others emerged, rather than reading independently, as students were typically expected to do in school settings. The library experience, for Carla and James, was inherently social. While they did engage in partner reading in their classrooms, it was prescribed in a way that the library was free from. Therefore, while I have argued previously that my focal children held dominant notions of what “counted” as reading (e.g. readers use strategies), the excerpt
demonstrates how this was also fluid, as students moved away from the desire for reading to be an individual act. This was evident when Carla shifted her thinking in the moment (transcript excerpt). This was an example of student agency, for “as Rockwell (1999: 122) argues, the larger social processes of children’s lives always ‘penetrate the space of schooling,’ although, I would add, they are not always recognized, acknowledged or responded to” (Dyson, 2001, p. 15). As Carla demonstrated, students enacted agency in bringing spaces of play and imagination to the library, though assuredly some forms of play were valued more than others. According to Carla, “sharing special stories” was one reason she enjoyed the library, as a space to connect with her friends in meaningful ways. Her comments signaled the importance of the library’s discursive space, where beyond specific materials, what engagements are possible was linked to what behaviors, attitudes, and embodiments the students took up. In constructing particular types of discursive space, some more privileged than others, students were able to garner spatial capital.

For Carla and James, as proficient readers according to school assessments, partner reading and engagement with texts was a welcome form of play, what I argue in later section of this chapter constitute a Thirdspace. While still a conventional reading activity, this format allowed students to dialogue playfully (Cohen, 2011) without the presence of assessments or even adult interactions. As noted previously, James could often be found reading Mo Willems books, reading them aloud and acting them out. During a browsing session on November 10th, 2016, James started out reading a Mo Willems book to himself, and then transitioned to reading it with a partner. Several minutes later, James stretched out on the floor as he continued reading with his partner. He got up to get another Mo Willems book, chatting briefly with another nearby student.
That student, his original partner, and James all returned to reading in their original spot, each with a different Mo Willems text. The students then began play fighting over the books, seemingly to determine who could read what by raising their voices and gesturing boldly. They quickly reverted back to reading and walked to the line together when called to line up (11/10/2016 Map). This literacy event will be described later in the chapter with more depth.

In a browsing session on December 16th, 2016 (see Figure 19), I observed Carla interacting with peers in ways that both negotiated the use of physical space, as well as constructed a particular kind of social space. Carla, originally seated in one of the comfy chairs, shared the chair with another student. They seamlessly switched between reading their own books, and then transitioned to show each other pages. When her chair partner got up to get a new book, Carla stretched out on the chair as a way of “saving” the space for her friend. In other words, she carved out a space to be a reader, and to be social, all at the same time.

In this way, Carla and her peer “claimed” physical space in efforts to carve out the social space in which they desired to read. This fluidity allowed Carla to exert agency in producing space. While physically saving the chair for her friend, Carla and her peer simultaneously negotiated the social space, exerting their power in sitting where—and with whom—they wanted. However, Carla did this playfully (Cohen, 2011), so as not to disrupt the quiet and calm environment that surrounded her and not to deviate from what was expected of her. No other students had access to the chair because Carla and her friend wanted to read together, demonstrated how sharing texts and stories with her friends shaped the social space, but often dialectically impacted the physical space.
Figure 19. Spatial map from Carla’s browsing (12/16/2016).

Dyson (2008) argues, in terms of student writing, that “not only were children socialized into practices, but they also exercised agency and recontextualized official practices, giving them relevance and meaning in their ongoing lives” (p. 152). Carla and James were socialized into particular notions of reading, where reading meant using strategies and staying focused. However, they also took up reading with friends agentically in a space where this was permitted, producing a new kind of peer culture. They stayed within what was deemed appropriate and what was expected, but also used this opportunity to engage with their peers and with texts in playful ways (and in ways not always permitted in the classroom), though neither pushed these boundaries too far. I argue that through a more fluid space (Leander et al., 2010), students were permitted (and perhaps implicitly encouraged) to be more agentic in constructing their readerly identities
with their peers. However, while students were afforded more freedom to engage with texts in the library, certain literacy practices were valued over others. Carla and James adhered to the schooled literacy practices privileged within the current culture of accountability (Olivant, 2015).

While children exhibited patterns in their reading preferences and engagements, these were not overly deterministic. For example, on January 10th, 2017, Carla utilized the browsing period during the library in a very different way than described previously. While seated next to a peer, Carla read *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991) on her own—a text that she referenced as a favorite during an interview. She demonstrated some movement in selecting books but was largely independent. This was different than I had seen her in the past. Perhaps her connection to the text prompted this desire to engage with it on her own. This shift suggests the flexibility of the space, in the sense that students created different spaces within the larger space. Furthermore, it demonstrated Carla’s ability to use the library’s fluidity to her own advantage, shifting her own fluid literacy practices across time (Moje & Luke, 2009). Some days (12/16/2016), she chose to engage in playful literacies with her peers, while at other times (1/10/2017), Carla opted to produce a solitary, quiet space in which to engage independently with a book. Other times, Carla constructed a space that was somewhat in-between social and solitary, where she chose to read quietly with a partner, but didn’t traverse the library space until students were directed to line up (11/10/2016 Map). Carla demonstrated across time, that discursive Secondspace is not stagnant, nor are the literacy practices that construct it.

**The significance of Mo Willems books.** While relying on my theoretical framework in looking for potential themes across my data, I also examined my data
inductively (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) for unexpected patterns. While a general love of books and sharing those books with others was obvious, all of my focal students mentioned one particular author over and over—Mo Willems. In fact, the beginning of the school year, while Amanda was still in the library, set the tone for Mo Willems texts as central to student experiences in the library. During the first browsing session, for example, Amanda and students crowded around the Mo Willems bins, prominently displayed at student eye level. Holding up a book, exclaiming “I don’t know this book!” (9/22/2016 FN, p. 7), Amanda invited students to engage right from the get-go. I began to wonder about the significance, then, of Mo Willems texts, and how this particular author informed the ways in which students engaged in the library and what texts they gravitated toward.

While James described a penchant for Mo Willems in particular, he was certainly not the only child in this class, school, or in general to love the texts. Mo Willems, as an author, deliberately writes his texts with students in mind, attempting to honor and engage their personalities and their intellect. In an interview, he stated “I respect children. I never will write a book that isn’t on their side” (Cooper & Schutt, 2007, p. 27), in response to questions about the popularity of his texts. The texts at James’ level (J and K) might be categorized as beginning chapter books, such as the Henry and Mudge (Rylant, 1996) series or the Frog and Toad (Lobel, 2003) series, where students were required to consider multiple characters, larger amounts of dialogue, and more complex plots. On the other hand, Mo Willems texts are shorter, often using all capital letters, exaggerated punctuation, and speech bubbles for a playful and lively effect. The Elephant and Piggie
series texts, written entirely with speech bubbles—short phrases, words, or utterances—lend themselves to animated voices, expressive reading, and acting out.

As Dyson (1995) would contend, student identities are shaped by the literacy resources at their disposal, but it was also the social interactions that mattered in these identity constructions. For James, the texts that he selected (whether leveled texts in his classroom or the Mo Willems books in the library) matter. His ability to select the texts that he wanted gave James a reason to interact socially with his peers and to play in ways not permitted in the classroom. In other words, the Firstspace materials themselves impacted the social moves that James took up. In turn, the library mattered to James, because it was a space where he could consistently select Mo Willems books without penalty.

The nature and design of the Mo Willems texts notwithstanding, Amanda influenced what seemed like a school-wide obsession. When I noticed the extent to which Mo Willems books were selected during every browsing session—made easy due to the prominent bins placed within arm’s reach—I asked her about this, even after she had been displaced as the librarian. She responded with:

I don’t know how much of it is my influence, but I can definitely say with 100% certainty that I’ve noticed my whole year last year and even in classrooms in general when I do read alouds. If I’m reading a book that’s not just a good book but a book that I personally love more than life itself, the... like it definitely transfers to the kids, for sure. I wouldn’t doubt if my love for Mo Willems transferred if not to the whole school because I think everyone knows how much I love him. That goes back to when I first, first, first, first, first knew about *Knuffle Bunny*. (12/9/2016 INT, p. 4)

In the library, pockets of freedom (often from reading levels) emerged, where the texts that students choose were based on desire, foregrounded before assessments or proficiency scales. Although the materials themselves (the Mo Willems texts) produced
this love and engagement, Amanda was also an active agent in encouraging this reading practice. After all, students in part gravitated toward the books because she professed a love for them and displayed multiple bins of the books prominently. Because the library was a deliberately unleveled space (New York City School Library System, n.d.), there was an openness to privileging the emotional response to a text, rather than only “counting” cognitive reading trajectories as measured by text leveling. This foregrounding of emotional responses remained complicated, however, as these sorts of engagements existed, but often fell by the wayside as student selection of texts was regulated by both level and content, by both peers and librarian. In other words, the discourses of assessment, specifically reading levels, seeped into the library, as I discuss in later sections of this chapter.

**The Affordances of Freedom of Movement**

Each of my focal students exercised mobility as they navigated the discourses of the school library, using the pockets of fluidity in the library to their advantage. Leander et al. (2010) prompt us to see spaces of learning as intersections, rather than parking lots, and ask questions about how the mobility afforded to certain students can be read through the lens of equity. Carla and Mark, for example, both demonstrated a tendency to move around the library, although this movement—and their identities as readers—was perceived differently because their positioning by others also took into account ability levels. Carla was a reader who was free to move about the library; however, she was not viewed as “off-task” when she did this, demonstrating how differently student actions can be read, depending on their status in the space and also within the school, where students’ reading proficiencies and behaviors were scrutinized. Mark, on the other hand, was
labeled as a struggling reader, and therefore his movement was sometimes read as avoidance. Carla, a “benchmark” reader who exemplified the behaviors of a good reader (Cook-Gumperz, 1986), had freedom of movement. Where readers who were marked as less proficient may have felt restricted or less welcome within school spaces, Carla traversed these boundaries with ease. Just as Zacher (2009) found, those students marked with more privilege—whether it be racial privilege or privilege based on ability and behavioral markers—often had a greater command of space and were comfortable in multiple spaces. Carla, in fact, was afforded both. In an interview on October 27th, 2016 (p. 6-7), I asked Carla how she felt about the library:

Carla: I feel, like, excited… because, I, I can’t wait till like maybe, I’ll find some new books that I haven’t read before. Or, or, I really want to get a book that, like, I really love. So uhh, yeah.
Alyson: Mmm hmm. And when you leave the school library, when your library time is over, how do you feel then?
Carla: Uhh… I still feel happy, because, you know.
Alyson: Because you get to go do something else?
Carla: Yeah.

During interviews Carla expressed being happy across multiple spaces and seemed to believe that the library and the classroom were not that different (save for the number of books), with socially-situated language such as: “I feel, like, excited” and “I still feel happy” to describe her literacy practices When I asked Carla who could be a good reader in the library, Carla answered “anybody,” and when asked who could be a good reader in the classroom, again she responded “anyone, again” (12/8/2016 INT, pp. 5-6), linking the two spaces through their commonalities and discussing the space as open to all readers. Because she positioned herself, and was seen by others, as a good reader, Carla was able to feel validated and successful in the classroom and in the library. For all students, language was a source of power (Luke, 1992), where the way people talked
about Carla’s ability, or Mark’s ability, over time played a large role in their own identities as readers.

Carla didn’t differentiate her reading practices across the spaces, and her smaller positioning shifts often went unnoticed because she was “wide-awake to the expectations and opportunities for literacy learning” (Siegel et al., 2008, p. 89). Carla was undoubtedly social, and yet she knew how to manage these social behaviors so that she was still marked as a “good girl” (Miller, 2005) and as a strong student. Carla demonstrated evidence of reading quietly with a partner (11/10/2017 FN), reading playfully with peers (12/16/2017 FN), and reading alone (1/10/2017 FN). Carla shifted the ways in which she read seamlessly, although each of her behaviors were accepted in the library, so she was given this freedom. However, Carla also shifted her positioning within the space instantaneously. On January 12th, 2017, for example, she was chatting with friends at the rug after a transition. When Deborah arrived, however, asking for attention, she quickly turned around and sat in the position that Deborah requested (1/12/2017 FN, p. 3). Carla knew when and how to be social, maneuvering herself physically depending on what was expected and/or permitted. The social spaces that she produced were not static. However, as I describe later in this chapter, a schooled demeanor can be paused to allow room for students to be silly.

Mark knew how and when to be social, too, with the goal of finding success as a reader despite the potential of others to perceive his movements as being “off-task.” For Mark, different positioning across spaces often worked in his favor. For example, during a browsing session on December 13th, 2016, Mark first spent ten minutes visiting the nurse. When he returned, he selected a joke book, and read it alone while sitting on the
bench on the side of the room. Several minutes later, he walked to the other side of the library, joining a group of students on the floor (12/13/2016 Map). Similarly, on January 11th, 2017, Mark first selected an Elephant and Piggie book when dismissed to browse, and then quickly abandoned it to move across the room. Once he moved, Mark settled near a friend and listened to him read. Switching again, Mark proceeded to wander around the room, settling down with a different Elephant and Piggie book and reading it cover to cover. When called to line up, Mark walked to the bin and finished the final pages before putting the book away (1/11/2017 Map).

During a return visit to City Partnership School on May 15th, 2017, after leaving the field, I again traced Mark strategically traversing space. He started by talking with me, and then shortly after, visited the restroom. Upon his return, he joined a group of students who were reading on the rug. When the space became crowded and noisy, he inched away to read on his own. As Deborah redirected the now even larger group on the rug, Mark walked over to the bench, holding a book and yet not reading it (5/15/2017 Map). Mark adeptly read the expectations set forth in the library and adjusted his behavior accordingly. His movements were not random “placeless” acts, but were products of Mark’s own desires, identity, and his reading of the expectations set forth in the space. For instance, as he noticed the rug area becoming loud, he swiftly removed himself, likely anticipating redirection (which he had experienced firsthand over the course of the year). Mark engaged in producing space through the intersections in his movement, selection of materials, and social connections with others during library sessions.
Mark took up multiple positions in the library; sometimes he was playful yet conscious of the watchful gaze of adults, other times he advocated for his reading level, and still displayed the schooled literacies that were expected of him. Holland et al. (1998) argued that in taking up analyses of identity, it’s important “to respect humans as social and cultural and therefore bounded, yet to recognize the process whereby human collectives and individuals often move themselves—led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness” (pp. 6-7). That is, as individuals we have laminated identities and cultural practices that are strong, and yet these are also not fixed. Carla adhered to the “good girl” persona (Miller, 2005), and yet also broke from this; Mark loved to browse, and yet sometimes became entranced in a single book. Students themselves had the power to construct their own social worlds, by engaging or disengaging with different discourses, and their subsequent positioning within these worlds.

**Carving Out Solitary Space**

Nikki’s production of space often diverged from that of the other students. Rather than traversing multiple spaces, like Carla and Mark often did, Nikki selected and cultivated spaces where she remained for most library periods, demonstrating that production of space didn’t always mean continual movement, because discursive space is fluid. Just because Nikki remained physically still, however, she still actively constructed the space around her through her choices. She remained networked through her social relations and materials, directing her flows of energy (Leander et al., 2010) for the purpose of producing a quiet and calm space for herself.

Leander (2002) reminds us that space cannot be analytically extracted from the activity that occurs within it. Turning my eye to the movement and activity that Nikki
took up in the library was essential to understanding how she read and constructed the library. Diverging in other ways from her classmates, Nikki *carved out space* to read alone, whereas Mark moved through space while creating new networks. Each of the students took up or resisted discourses about literacy that were already in circulation throughout the space, emphasizing some discourses over others.

On February 13th, 2017, I observed Nikki sitting in the comfy chair reading on her own—a negotiation between her and the other students in the room. When dismissed to browse, she hurried over to the chair to reserve that space for herself. She remained in that chair for the remainder of the period, moving only when she desired a new book. In overlaying portions of these fieldnotes with pieces of the multimodal map from January 25th, 2017, in efforts to see new patterns (Schmidt, 2017), the recurring nature of Nikki’s movements and engagements became visible—the hurrying over to the comfy chair to remain for most of the browsing session. Nikki seemed to know what the physical arrangement of the comfy chair might provide for her in terms of a quiet space and made both conscious and consistent efforts to take advantage of the opportunity to construct her own reading experience. However, during the earlier read-aloud on January 25th, 2017, she had appeared slightly disengaged. When she entered the library, she sat down and immediately began talking with friends. When the read-aloud began, she didn’t sit criss-cross. Unlike Mark, who did sit criss-cross quietly, Nikki didn’t receive the external validation—she didn’t get the tickets that the para-educator handed out to students (Mark did receive a ticket). Yet, because she was constructed as a reader with a higher level, these external validations were not consequential. This Secondspace interaction (through the use of the Firstspace tickets), between Nikki and the para-educator created a
discursive space that afforded some students validation, and not others. Nikki did often engage with me during my visits, and often asked what I was writing down, or in the instance on December 13th, 2016 (see Figure 20), showed me what she was reading.

![Figure 20. Spatial map of Nikki in the comfy chair (12/13/2016).](image)

Furthermore, Nikki, unlike most other focal students, did not interact with her classmates often. For this reason, most browsing sessions consisted of her carving out space to read independently. However, Nikki also conversed more with adults than with her own peers (11/9/2016 FN. p. 2). At times (e.g. 11/9/2016, 12/13/2016, 2/8/2017), Nikki came over to me to chat—something that I didn’t often see her doing with her own classmates. Dyson (2003) contends that socially, children use language and literacy to participate with others and organize their social worlds (Dyson, 2003). For Nikki, however, instead of using literacy to connect socially with others, she saw it as an opportunity to read on her own. Importantly, the networks within the library allowed her
to make that choice, offering a physical environment with many different areas and formats to be a reader.

**Constructing Spaces of Play**

As Holland et al (1998) argue, play is a central part of the social and cultural worlds of children. While reading levels are an important part of the literacy experiences that students have in schools, play offers them an opportunity to exercise agency and shape their literate lives in new ways. Through play, the Thirdspace (Soja, 1996) interruptions in the library became evident. Children’s play requires that adults relinquish some degree of control, and thus free play is discouraged in most official school spaces. Cohen (2011) draws on Sutton-Smith to argue that play is “imaginative, spontaneous, unpredictable, flexible, and powerful” (p. 177). In Cohen’s (2011) study, students were given more freedom and power to resist rules and expectations through pretending. As I discuss in the next section, instances of play were a key characteristic of the more fluid browsing sessions in the library. Rather than dismiss them as interruptions or “cracks” (Soja, 1996), however, I foreground the Thirdspace to consider how the library might be different.

**Browsing as a Form of Play**

The browsing sessions at City Partnership School were a time of greater mobility, freedom in material selection, and heightened noise as students explored multiple modes of literacy (Rowsell & Wohlwend, 2016). Using books to play fight, acting out scenes, and crawl on the floor are all variations of play that I observed in the library at City Partnership School throughout the duration of this study. Browsing periods were self-
directed, as students were simply told to “browse.” This phrase had a situated meaning in the library (Gee, 2005), which connoted particular behaviors (select books, read them calmly as you wish). However, it was also contextualized within the broader social practices of reading for enjoyment. As Cohen (2011) found in her study of young children’s play, play can be a mechanism for students to construct their own social worlds, where they can take up different kinds of language and movement. While I have argued in previous chapters that the library often conformed to dominant notions of schooled literacy, the possibilities of play still existed in the library browsing sessions, even if those possibilities were fleeting due to the discourses that travelled across the artificial boundaries within a school.

During browsing sessions, Carla and James typically switched fluidly between reading independently and reading with partners. Carla often stayed in the same physical place, although she also chose to traverse space. James, on the other hand, exerted more mobility across the physical room, as he moved about to shift between Mo Willems books, using the material texts to guide these social practices. During an observation on November 10th, 2016, James switched seamlessly between various “kinds” of reading.

In this scene, James was highly mobile within a small amount of physical space and engaged playfully with his peers and with the texts. For example, he used the texts as a way to partner read with other students around him, and even engaged in play fighting, pretending to argue over who got to read which book. Irrespective of play fighting being discouraged in the library, James engaged in this activity for a short period of time before returning to his object (the Mo Willems book). Therefore, while one interpretation of this movement in the broader context may be that James was wrapped up in the social aspect
of literacy and perhaps got “carried away,” “hacking” (Schmidt, 2017) this moment suggests the potential for intentional resistance, where James knew that using the book in these unofficial ways was not permitted, and yet engaged nonetheless. The play may have “ended” as students were called to line up, however, the social interactions continued even as students were called to line up.

![Figure 21. Spatial map of Mo Willems play fighting (11/10/2016).](image)

Of course, it’s important to note that while the students exhibited playful manners, they do not necessarily characterize these literacy engagements as play. In an interview (2/2/2017, pp. 3-4) with James, I decided to ask him directly about these episodes, having seen him engage in what I had deemed play:

Alyson: James, do you ever get to play in the library?
James: No.
Alyson: So what do you do? What are some things that you normally do?
James: I read, and I respond, and also… I color.
Alyson: So, when you go to the library, do you feel like you get to do whatever you want?
James: No…
Alyson: No? Who decides what you get to do?
James: Ms. Walter [Deborah].
Alyson: Hmm… What about during the browsing?
James: I still have to listen to Ms. Walter’s [Deborah] words.

While the students didn’t label these browsing sessions as play, given that play was discouraged, there was a contrast in the browsing periods with the other ways that students took up reading practices while in the library. When students were permitted to browse after the read-aloud, there was often an influx of movement and noise, as students were permitted to make active decisions in the moment about what to select, where to go, and who to read with. As the browsing sessions began and movement and noise became heightened, some of the decision-making power that adults held was relinquished. There, the “unofficial culture” of children’s worlds became clearer (Hall, 2011) as playfulness was able to overtake the established order of how things in schools are “supposed” to go. These Thirdspace cracks in the expected discursive space, offered an opportunity for students to be subversive, if they chose to do so. Importantly, these Thirdspace interruptions often arose because of the power of the Mo Willems books for the students in this study.

“Careful” Play—Carving Fluid Spaces

The library, as a space networked to a variety of books, notions of choice, and a democratic history (albeit a segregated history of inequitable access), many times offered a space of increasing flexibility for readers of all ability levels. The library became a space of choice because of the variety of books offered; conversely, it sometimes became an extension of the classroom as accountability discourses (such as reading levels), and the restructuring of the library to accommodate assessment schedules, shifted these
networks of space. As James browsed, for example, he often engaged in multiple literacy practices across the timeframe—talking with peers, acting out books, and reading alone. Some of these practices also flowed into the classroom, for example, “acting out” the Mo Willems books was a practice that didn’t fit within the norms of independent reading. In other words, some literacy practices and discourses were welcomed across spaces, and some were contained (or attempted to be contained), lest they disrupt the practices in the classroom that students and teachers were expected to adhere to.

In observing this play, I considered Bahktin’s notion of carnival, a chaotic, joyous, and often subversive time. As I examined the play fighting that James engaged in as a “way of breaking down barriers, of overcoming power inequalities and hierarchies” (Cohen, 2011, p. 178). The library might have offered a space for students to resist reading hierarchies and traditional notions of adult authority, as the students were not leveled in this space. Through play, they could rethink who can be a reader, using their own socially-situated literacies to “sneak in” moments of play even during the official reading time.

In my second interview with James, I asked him (December 15th, 2017) to draw what it looked like to read, and he drew a person smiling. He also included aspects of “good reading”—such as looking at the pictures, imagining the book, and reading with friends (see Figure 22). To James, sharing books with friends was not mutually exclusive for displaying the expected behaviors, but in fact, often overlapped. Despite these two realms often being treated as dichotomous in school, James demonstrates the complexity of these overlapping practices in the library. When I asked him why he drew someone in that way, he responded that “Because he already finished it [the book] and he was
excited” (p. 3). When I asked him if there was anything else that he wanted to draw, he said “I want to add one more thing. And he was excited because he shared it with his friend” (p. 3). I continued to probe, asking James if he shared books with friends in the library, and he responded with “I like reading with friends but sometimes they don’t want to read with me” (p. 3).

Figure 22. James’ picture of the library (12/15/2016).

James desired literacy to be a social experience, even if it didn’t always transpire that way. At times, James wielded less power in the library space, where he sat on the periphery of social interactions, more so than he did in the more structured space of the classroom (Wohlwend, 2008). Despite this, the space offered the possibility for these interactions, the “sharing with friend” and being “excited” in a way that other school spaces did not. In the library, he wanted a different type of literacy experience—a social
experience—than the classroom, where the possibilities were often narrowed by assessment and instructional expectations.

The notions of schooled literacies were nonetheless powerful despite small pockets of play, silliness, or other ways of “being” a reader. Ultimately, no matter where he was, James stated that “I still have to listen.” For example, even in this same interview, as I asked James to draw a picture of himself in the library, he drew himself reading. When prompted to talk more about his picture, James retold the main parts of the *Knuffle Bunny* (Willems, 2004) book that he drew (2/2/2017 INT, p. 3), a comprehension strategy emphasized in his classroom literacy instruction. For James then, what the library meant as a space is that it was a space for reading, but that within this categorization, there were multiple possibilities. Perhaps this was a “schooled” response that he thought I wanted to hear, and it’s also quite possible that James had fully internalized the notions of schooled literacies, such as independent reading and retelling a story. As I conducted this interview with James, we were in the classroom as Deborah was facilitating a reading response activity with students. In the background (2/2/2017 INT, pp. 2-3) at various places, you could hear her complimenting their careful work and working behaviors. Therefore, as James considered what it meant to be in the library and what it meant to be a reader, real and observable schooled literacy practices were circulating in and through the discursive space of the classroom, which was also informed by the physical desks and reading response materials. Yoon (2014) has found that while children use play to negotiate their social relations, these practices are often tense, and perhaps in James’ case, not recognized or valued as play at all.
James, a student marked as an advanced reader, was able to engage with literacy in multiple ways, constructing the experience he desired, without sacrificing his status. Diverging from many of the activities described above, on February 1st, 2017, during a browsing period, James chose to read on his own. That said, he did do some partner reading, and I traced movements around the room (to switch books and ask peers for books). For example, often he would approach other students and ask to trade books or would engage in conversation if a student came up to him. Even more so, he went off by himself several times to read. He did the Mo Willems voices on his own, playfully. As an observer, I read James’ movements as purposeful, both in selecting the materials that he wanted, but also in producing the space that he needed to interact with those materials while still being positioned as a successful reader.

Therefore, while I have argued that the library offers the potential for social literacies, this shifted over and between time. Here, James took advantage of the literacy materials at hand—namely the Mo Willems texts—to participate in literacy with his peers. Dyson (2003) further argues that students bring their own agency to texts, and therefore, school literacies can play out in interesting and yet complex ways. The interaction between the materials and the social practices here gave James a way to forge new relationships with his peers through multiple modes (Rowsell & Wohlwend, 2016) of making meaning.

James, like Carla, demonstrated the ability to toggle freely between playful tendencies and then revert back to what was expected. This was due to his behavior, but also his ability, as James was marked by his teacher as an advanced reader. During an observation of the literacy block in the classroom on December 12th, 2016, I watched
James while he was book shopping. To his friend, he said “I can read all the books in here. I can read all C/D books.” Later, he then said, “This one [Humpty Dumpty] is so easy but it’s a J!” (12/12/2016 FN, p. 3). James was clearly aware of his reading level, and this marker of his ability/proficiency allowed him more movement and the ability to play. For example, because he was a higher level than most students in his class, James—in many ways—didn’t need to worry about how his small instances of play would impact his overall positioning as a strong reader. James, by nature of his reading level, was afforded more access to a diversity of literacy practices. The disciplining of bodies in the library and other spaces, according to schooled literacies, was not applied equitably across students (Leander et al., 2010). In this way, the discourses of reading levels, and who was considered a “good reader” were intimately connected to what students are permitted or encouraged to do in various spaces across the school setting.

Because of the privileges afforded by his status, James had command of play. He switched seamlessly between the expected or approved behaviors and moments of playfulness, where these expected behaviors were challenged or contradicted for short periods of time. These moments might be thought of as Thirdspaces or counterspaces—as “spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning” (Soja, 1996, p. 68). While James did counter the expected or approved behaviors, demonstrating a certain amount of resistance, he did so with caution, and never to jeopardize his status. For Soja (1996), these interruptions and cracks in the expected are moments of learning and transformation, deliberately open for learning about the possibilities of student agency. James provided fleeting glimpses at what a library that was free from levels, and truly open to student choice, might look like.
In particular, during a Martin Luther King, Jr. activity response (1/12/2017 FN, p. 3), James turned in his paper after completing it appropriately, raised his hand, and listened to the discussion. However, during other moments or cracks in space and time, James engaged in playful behaviors (e.g. reciting the alphabet on the rug, talking with his neighbor, and playing with his pencil). Just as Carla “saved” space or “carved out” space, James did the same thing—and used this carved out physical space to engage with his peers in a social manner. I took these instances of play and examine them alongside other browsing periods, such as the play fighting that James engaged in on November 10th, 2016 with his friend over the Mo Willems book. In doing so, new patterns of movement and new meanings emerged (Schmidt, 2017), in this case illuminating repeated patterns, as James demonstrated the desire for play, and yet did so without deviating far from the expected or privileged ways of being a reader. This ultimately indicated the comfort that Mo Willems books brought to James, offering him a mechanism for engaging in the Secondspaces as he pleased.

To further illustrate these tendencies, on January 24th, 2017, I observed James doing a reading response to a *Frog and Toad* (Lobel, 2003) book. He traded crayons with his table mates and announced, “this is frog, this is toad!” (1/24/2017 FN, pp. 3-4) with enthusiasm. Again, he demonstrated playful tendencies but stayed within the boundaries of what was appropriate and welcome in school, adept at reading these subtleties. Like Carla, James did exhibit playful behaviors, but not to the extent of losing his positioning as a good student and as a strong reader. James’ reading response also demonstrated what was desired by Deborah, as he filled up the entire space with a detailed and colorful picture and wrote a sentence as directed. During that same observational period, James
chatted with peers and was slightly silly when the class was called to line up, but then, reverted to expected behavior when the class was corrected as a whole. Siegel et al. (2008) position students as agents capable of designing meanings, and crafting identities across the various spaces within a school. I took this similar stance to my study of James, positioning him as an active agent across time and space, and yet still operating within the discourses of accountability that traveled into the library.

As Dyson (2003) argues, children engage in literacy and play in ways that are fluid, integrating their own knowledge with their notions of schooled literacy. James, in exercising his agency, moved seamlessly from interacting with peers—and acting out texts—to removing himself into a quiet space to engage in literacy on his own. This speaks to the importance of looking at the various ways that children play and the ways in which they use social space to help them do this (e.g. sometimes carving out space for him to be on his own, while other times it was using the space and moving about the space to talk with others). The space created during one browsing period, both through the materials as well as the discourses, was not necessarily the space created during another—spaces are fluid across time as well (Leander, 2002).

**And yet, this play is managed.** Over the course of the time that I spent at City Partnership School’s library, I noticed how often students who did not conform to notions of schooled literacy were removed from browsing time, at least temporarily. Browsing became a time of freedom, but a conditional time of freedom. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deborah constructed a firm boundary between “her time” (reading responses and read-alouds) and “student time” (browsing sessions). Leveraging the browsing sessions, as these were loved by students, Deborah was able to construct a
predictable structure, where browsing sessions were held as a reward for students behaving appropriately during “her time.” Constructing this dichotomy, and setting forth consequences for students, ensured that Deborah retained most decision-making power during library sessions. In this policing of the library browsing time, the ability to read for enjoyment became contingent on adhering to the schooled behaviors. Deborah used “time-outs” as a way to reclaim power within the discursive space of the school library, therefore empowering the adult and not the child. Rather than disrupting traditional power structures, the browsing “time outs” reinforced them, calling upon the discourses of schooled literacy to police student behaviors.

Students were aware of the expectations and subsequent consequences for not following those expectations and policed themselves and one another accordingly. For example, at the beginning of library class on January 10th, 2017, a classmate was already sitting on the bench, presumably in time-out. As Deborah began reading, the student called out that only students listening would be able to browse. Validating that this was indeed the case, Deborah responded with “I’m glad you know that” (1/10/2017 FN, p. 1). Setting clear expectations and outlining consequences seemed key to Deborah’s organization of the social space. Later in the session, in fact, two students were put in a “time-out” on the bench, and therefore sat out of their browsing time for that session. On February 8th, 2017, another student was asked to sit even further from the rug—at the back tables—also as a consequence for making noises during the read-aloud. These instances were not uncommon, and students were repeatedly asked to sit out of browsing as a result of their behaviors. (e.g. fieldnotes 12/19/2016, 1/10/2017, 1/24/2017, and 4/27/2017). Deborah was explicit about using the browsing time as a mechanism for
behavior management, for example, verbally reminding students that “whoever does it [talks out] again will sit out of browsing!” (5/15/2017 FN). These actions clearly delineated what she considered “her” time, and what was student time. Student time, however, had the potential to be interrupted by a time-out, so the discursive spaces were delineated clearly.

Spaces are constantly in the making, and Leander et al. (2010) remind us that “new movements of ideas, objects, and bodies—are especially difficult to sustain as they come into contact with old space/‘thick place’” (p. 339). In the library, new forms of literacy practices, such as browsing, did circulate. However, when integrated with the powerful notions of schooled literacy practices that simultaneously existed in the space, they were often not sustained.

**Resisting Schooled Literacies in a Malleable Space**

Despite the management of student bodies and activities, the pockets of freedom that existed in the library were not only taken up in playful ways but were also a space of resistance. For example, despite not raising her hand with the frequency that Mark did Nikki seemed less concerned with how she was perceived. In an observation of the classroom literacy block, when redirected by her classroom teacher to get in her rug spot, she talked back, responding with “I am in my spot” (11/22/2016 FN, p. 4). Similarly, Nikki responded to some of my requests for her participation with irritation. For example, during an interview that I conducted with her and Mark (1/12/2017 INT, pp. 13-14), I struggled at times to elicit answers from Nikki, who did not seem concerned with garnering my approval.
In this instance, Nikki cleverly avoids answering my questions, preferring to move around the library on her own terms. The space was, as she saw it, hers to explore. She seemed to view her time with me as an advantage and used that time to engage as she pleased. Unlike Mark, Nikki didn’t need to perform in ways that might “prove” that she was a strong reader, because her reading level did that for her—it made her ability visible. In my last interview with Nikki and Mark, Nikki similarly “co-opted” our time together in the library, using agency to use the time as she wished. As I asked her to come back to the tables with me, she replied: “We’re not in trouble, we’re in the library! My teacher doesn’t even know we’re doing this” (2/16/2017 INT, p. 10). As Campano, Ghiso, and Welch (2016) contend, children’s actions that may be initially seen as “off task,” such as the way I initially read Nikki’s reply to my request, were actually forms of agency, where children actively engaged in shaping and re-shaping the space to their own preferences or desires. Because we were in the library during a time where it was not being used for instruction, it was left open for Nikki to do this spatial construction in various ways. By stating that her teacher didn’t know we were doing this, Nikki positioned our activity as secretive or subversive—it was a Thirdspace crack to her
seemingly normal or routine school day, despite being a deliberately planned part of my research agenda.

This moment of agency and resistance was an unexpected Thirdspace that manifested differently for Nikki and myself. As she perceived our time as an interruption, it was her subversion of my authority that produced a crack in the discursive space for my research. The moment that I describe next—where Mark and Nikki resisted my adult directives—was a space of confusion and frustration. In other words, this was a “cracked” space that went against the typical flow of a library session and one that was complex for me as a researcher. However, it wasn’t simply the fact that Nikki and Mark were with me, and not their classroom teachers, that made this moment unexpected and left more room for student agency. Because we were in the library and not the classroom, Nikki and Mark undertook different kinds of interactions, as the library had looser parameters as a more malleable space. In a sense, the space and the time gave them permission to be different and yet, this particular space and time was fleeting.

The conversation between Nikki and Mark was difficult to follow due to their verbal resistance of my directives, as well as their physical embodiments. During this last interview with them (2/16/2017), both Nikki and Mark took control of the space, walking away from where we were seated at the tables to roam around on the rug area (where browsing takes place). Both students began jumping on the various letters of the alphabet rug while singing the alphabet song to themselves. Then, as I tried to bring them back, the following interaction transpired (2/16/2017 INT, pp. 12-13):

Alyson: Okay guys, back to the tables. Time to finish up.
[Nikki and Mark continued to play on the rug, got a book and started looking at it]
Alyson: Hey Nikki and Mark, I’ve got to take you back [to class] if you don’t come back to the tables.
[They laid on the floor and continued reading a book. I walked over to pick the book up, and Mark wedged his finger in it]
Nikki: But, it says “please open this book!” We have to open it.
[We all laugh]
Alyson: We have to finish up, I’ve got to get you back to class!
[Still opened the book and read it together]
Mark: Let’s go in the page with the dirty monsters.
[Nikki continued reading the book as Mark looked on]
Mark: Who wants to read everybody’s book?
Nikki: We have to go on the page until it says “Stay on this page!”
Mark: Whaaa!
Alyson: Okay, one more page and then we have to close it.
Nikki: But we have to stay on this page! Because the book is almost ending. Also, the banana (on the page).
Mark: (laughs)
Nikki: So, we have to stay on this page!
[I moved to close the book]
Nikki: No, don’t close it!
Mark: Yeah, but…
Alyson: Come on. We’ve got to finish captioning your picture, please.
[Mark grabbed a Mo Willems book]
Nikki: How about *Cupcake Jones*?
Alyson: Mark and Nikki, quickly please.
Mark: What is this book?
Alyson: Mark, we’re going to finish captioning yours, and Nikki I’m going to ask you…
Mark: Can we please open this book?

Although both Mark and Nikki were involved in this interaction, it was Nikki who took the lead over the conversation and used the book as the platform with which to engage in that resistance through language such as “we have to open it,” “we have to go on the page,” and “no, don’t close it!” In fact, the language of the text itself served as a tangible, material, Firstspace tool that Nikki expertly utilized to resist my directives. Although at first glance this could be considered as “obedient” behavior in the sense that Nikki didn’t listen to my requests, Nikki adeptly used her literacy practices, and the affordances of the otherwise empty library, to get what she wanted—more time with the book. Nikki took an official literacy material, the book, and used it in an *unofficial*
manner (Dyson, 1993). She connected the world of the library with the social world that she and Mark constructed in this moment and in this space. She agentively mobilized her literacy practices, reading the pages of the book to support her claims, and therefore, attempting to outsmart the adult (me). Physically, both Nikki and Mark participated in laying on the floor, wedging their fingers in the book, and selecting new books. In doing so, both students made a space of resistance through their interactions with the book, with each other, and with me. In other words, social spaces were constructed, and Mark and Nikki “[were] active subjects who shape and are shaped by spatial encounters” (Schmidt, 2017, p. 106) through their use of the material and physical space.

In analyzing this transcript spatially, my interaction with the children emerges as a Thirdspace “crack” or “interruption” (Sheehy, 2010) to how I anticipated the interview would go, thus bringing into relief the power relations and assumed linearity of my research “plan.” At the time, I didn’t know how to get Mark and Nikki to do what I wanted—the space felt unruly and disorderly—which was to answer my questions. It was only by reflecting on this incident that I saw it as a Thirdspace (Soja, 1996) that transformed, where the power that I (as a teacher figure and researcher) held shifted to the students, who used their literacy practices to own the space and refused to answer the interview questions I had prepared. Simultaneously, they used their bodies to construct their positions (Leander, 2002); in laying on the floor, Nikki and Mark produced an informal space that matched their verbal resistance. Furthermore, Mark and Nikki subverted my adult authority by using play as a cultural tool (Yoon, 2014). The hierarchical roles of adult and students, where adults often guided conversations with children, shifted in this moment.
Nikki and Mark were able to exert power in this interaction because they purposely and effectively read the social context, one where the teacher was absent, and used it to their advantage. Zacher (2009) suggests that “youth might, in a sense, draw maps of their racial identities, map their sense of who they are, racially speaking, by marking similarities and differences” (p. 275). I positioned Mark, Nikki, James, and Carla as students who were very deliberately, albeit subconsciously, crafting their own identities as readers across spaces in City Partnership School, to varying degrees of privilege. By traversing space in ways that were not “permitted,” including laying down on the floor and wedging fingers in the book in efforts to keep it open, Nikki and Mark made statements about who they were as readers—what they liked to read, how they wanted to read, and that they didn’t need permission to read. Zacher (2009) also nudges us to consider what relationships are constructed through the actions of the students and the social space. In this instance, Mark and Nikki produced a camaraderie, where they both disobeyed my requests, and left the space of the library open to their own desires.

**Identities as Constructed Across Networked Spaces**

The spaces that individuals traverse and produce, whether they be spaces of fluid practices or laden with constraints, have implications for identity. In fact, simply access to sites like school libraries can offer students opportunities for agency, an increasing equity concern in the midst of dwindling education budgets and assessment-laden systems (Stahl & Schweid, 2013). Nikki’s resistance (described above) was both indicative of her existing identity and agency, and yet she continually carved out a readerly identity at the same time. Drawing from Moje and Luke (2009), I conceptualize
identity as a lamination, whereby identities “thicken” over time as individuals take up multiple positions across spaces. Each focal student’s identity practices in the library were also reflective of the many different positions that they have taken up, or have been imposed on them, across their classrooms, homes, and communities.

**Identities are Not Monolithic**

As Ghiso (2015) reminds us, identities are not monolithic. For example, while Carla did exemplify schooled literacy behaviors and a desire to please those who might evaluate her academic performance (Miller, 2005), there were evidences of Carla going against this and even acting silly. For example, on January 12th, 2017, while students completed a MLK dot-to-dot art piece, she looked up and said, “we’re all drawing a portrait of Mr. C.” I asked who that was, and she responded that it was the recess teacher (1/12/2017 FN, p. 2), clearly making a joke as her peers at the table laughed. Later in the period, this happened again—Carla sang to me “cat will cry, mother will call the FBI” and we both laughed (1/12/2017 FN, p. 3). Carla, in these moments, demonstrated a “silliness” that may not be described as adhering strictly to schooled literacies. However, because Carla was already marked as a good reader, she was allowed, or even afforded, these moments. In other words, she had enough “laminations” of a good girl persona (Moje & Luke, 2009), that should she step out of this for a moment, it was not enough to implicate how she was positioned. She was able to straddle the line between approved classroom behaviors and play.

Like Carla, Mark desired to be marked as a proficient reader, although he encountered challenges with this. As discussed in the previous chapter, for Mark there was a clear connection between the schooled literacy behaviors that he employed (e.g.
raising his hand consistently even if he didn’t have the right answer), and his desire to be perceived as a reader. His desired identity shaped and reshaped the behaviors that he took up. For example, in a small word study group during his regular literacy block, Mark originally put his thumb up to indicate whether the word was real or nonsense, but quickly looked at his peers with sideways thumbs and changed his response. As it turned out, Mark was initially correct, but was clearly influenced by how his classmates had responded (11/22/2016 FN, p. 4). However, Mark’s identity was fluid, and at times, he acted against expectations or impulsively. As Deborah explained, “Mark is good but he chats some,” several minutes later pointing out however that “he’s going to be a very good student” (5/15/2017 INT, pp. 1-2).

Yet, on February 8th, 2017 Mark again showed just how conscious he was of his ability, and how much this impacted his identity as a reader. During the library browsing session, Mark first read an I-Spy (Wick & Marzollo, 1992) book, quickly abandoning it and chatting with me instead. A few minutes later, he brought a book called The Rainforest Race (Bergen, 2008) over to me, saying “I’m a level D, this is an E.” I prompted him to try reading it (which was difficult), and he quickly abandoned the book, getting up from me and going to put it away. Despite the low buzz of noise as the students around him browsed, he then sat, reading on his own, swapping for another book a couple minutes later. Soon after, Mark brought Frog and Toad Are Friends (Lobel, 2003) over to me, asking me to read it to him. He slid next to me on the bench, and I put my notes to the side as we shared the text. I read it, pausing at words that he knew and asking him to fill them in. Upon finishing the chapter, Mark hugged me and said, “thank you!” (2/8/2017 Map). Mark exhibited agency in trying to read, and because he was
already connected with me, and used the space and these connections to have a meaningful literacy event.

*Figure 23. Spatial map of Mark’s mobile reading practices (2/8/2017).*

Although Mark did “act out” at other times, he did so judiciously. Therefore, he was conscious of “acting out” only when it would not impact how he was perceived (or how he believed he was perceived). The spanking episode noted in the map above (see Figure 23) fell outside of what is not only expected in the classroom and library, but it also demonstrated a disruption in Mark’s employment of schooled literacies. This Thirdspace (Soja, 1996) was a space of risk, of uncertainty. While spatial analysis in general attends to the continual movement and instability of space (Leander & Sheehy, 2004), the Thirdspace dimension in particular privileges the interruptions that so often are
dismissed. For Mark, this space that he constructed was unsafe, as he risked being seen, found out, and punished for his actions. Of course, while these actions produced cracks in the social space, it was Mark who used his agency to do so.

A similar “crack” in the social space occurred when students used the space to create moments of play at the disapproval of Deborah. On December 13th, 2016 for example, one student told Deborah that a group of students were playing, and she responded by moving to the group and saying, “I hope you aren’t playing over there” (12/13/2016 FN, p. 2). Therefore, even the fluid spaces that were produced during the browsing period were not stagnant—and the potential disruptions transformed the space in a myriad of ways. At other times, Mark merely seemed distracted during read-alouds, and this was a possible explanation for the “readerly behaviors” that he did not display. For example, during the initial read-aloud December 9th, 2016 Mark whispered things to himself while on the rug and was asked to move. Yet, other times, he followed directions precisely, such as during line-up times (12/9/2016 FN, p. 4). During an observation on 12/13/2016, I observed Mark wander around the library, selecting books—first, a joke book—and then switching the book several minutes later. During this same browsing period, ten minutes were spent making a visit to the nurse. While not disruptive, Mark seemed to have little direction when it came to selecting texts and reading high volumes of texts, a value that was promoted in his general literacy instruction and by many literacy experts (Allington, 2011). Because Mark did not yet obtain those tangible markers of reading (e.g. be at the benchmark reading level), he performed the behaviors that he thought would mark him as a strong reader.
However, this speaks to Mark’s identity, and the fact that he was trying to locate and construct his identity as a reader. His seemingly “wandering” activity was reflective of his larger attempts to find where he fit in the library, and more broadly, within the school. His identity was not monolithic or static (Ghiso, 2015), as he often displayed conflicting identities as a reader, depending on what he was expected to engage in. The pockets of fluidity in the library both shaped and reshaped Mark’s identity, just as he simultaneously traversed the space to engage in literacy as he pleased—the relationship between Mark and the social space was dialectic (Leander et al., 2010). For example, Mark emphasized how he was helpful in the library, which perhaps might have earned him praise in other ways. In the first interview with Mark (10/13/2016 INT, p. 5), he described how much he enjoyed helping people:

Mark: Yeah, but I like, really, helping people.
Alyson: Do you? How do you help people in the library?
Mark: Well, if [student] wanted a book and somebody slipped on it… I got it before she slipped on it.
Alyson: Oh.
Mark: She almost slipped.
Alyson: So is that why the return bin is so important?
Mark: Yeah.

By pointing out the ways in which he was helpful in the library, Mark positioned himself as someone who was valuable and perhaps even needed in the library space. Furthermore, Dyson (1993) argues that students interact with one another in a myriad of playful ways, and “such performances involved the risk of rejection, but they also potentially offered the respectful attention and responsive participation of others” (p. 72). When Mark walked over to Nikki (1/25/2017 FN, p. 3) and asked, “can you read this, Nikki?” he was inviting Nikki into a playful conversation. Given their back and forth
around reading levels and reading proficiency, Mark invited Nikki into a discussion where he asserted his own ability and opened the space to receive her approval.

**Conclusion: Choice, Play, Mobility**

As Wohlwend (2008) states, “reconceptualizing play as a multimodal literacy re-centers play in school curriculum as a valuable semiotic system in its own right and revalues play as essential to ‘new basics’” (p. 135). Perhaps browsing shouldn’t be seen as a “reward” but rather, as a literacy event that was valuable in its own right. Students both adhered to schooled literacy practices, and yet also broke from these—power was wielded spatially (Wohlwend, 2008), keeping some practices or individuals on the periphery of social space.

While Mark, Nikki, Carla, and James each constructed the space of the library differently and for different purposes, their experiences converged and diverged. The library was a unique space, amorphous—part of the larger school and as similar to the classroom (with an emphasis on reading levels) and yet distinct (with allowed freedom of movement and choice in readings). While the library was distinct from the rest of the school context, there were elements of the larger school institution that continued to shift, shape, and complicate the library space and what students were able to do there, because the discourses of other school spaces were inextricably networked to those of the library.

Talk and action in time-spaces laminated present, past, and future events (Leander & Sheehy, 2004); this, in turn, opened multiple positions that students could take up within social space. Ultimately, for each student, this produced amorphous space. Different roles were available to students in the classroom than in the library, and yet
these roles must still be continuously examined. Leander et al. (2010) ask, “how could school places be made more affectively malleable to become more equitable?” (p. 340). Understanding how children use and construct space in various ways is a first step toward this vision.
Chapter VI
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Like most research, the findings of this dissertation study indicate the immense questions that still linger about literacy and the space of a school library. It is one small sliver in exploring what it means to be a first-grader in an urban elementary school library. The library is full of possibilities—possibilities for success, for enjoyment, and for forming relationships with others while carving out identities for oneself. However, the library is also full of contradictions. It is a space that shifts in response to accountability measures, that is in danger of seeing decreasing funds and qualified staff, and a space that ultimately has the potential to disappear as educational policy changes. The library is a malleable space, one that is laden with tensions and yet simultaneously offers many possibilities for student agency.

Conclusion: The Library as a Networked Space

The findings of this dissertation illustrate that, first and foremost, the library at City Partnership School was networked space, one that was inherently connected to the discourses circulating within other school spaces. The production of the space was therefore an amalgamation of physical materials, social processes, and literacy practices that overlapped, intersected, and informed one another. Individuals used their languages and literacies to produce a variety of discursive spaces, some of which resembled the classroom, while at other times disrupted a schooled vision in favor of a more fluid one.
Notions of “schooled literacy” (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) were powerful in shaping the library space, particularly emphasized within the discussions around leveled texts, assessments, and expected behaviors that permeated the library. These networks became part of the curriculum; both in how the librarians took up literacies in the library, but also how Amanda then carried these notions with her into the classroom, demonstrating that networks flowed in both directions. Her decision to move away from an overemphasis on reading levels once in the classroom, for example, produced a new type of book shopping, and potentially one where students had more choice.

As a networked space, the library at City Partnership School was often contingent on the larger accountability discourses that circulated across the school. In many ways, the pressures of the larger school institution seeped into the library, which therefore shifted in response to larger school needs or priorities. This was perhaps most clear with Amanda’s transition to the third-grade classroom when a new teacher was needed, but it happened in smaller ways as well. Many times, when I would arrive at City Partnership School to collect my data, the library was a testing center for the day, or was hosting a parent breakfast meeting. This meant that the library sessions were held in the classroom, essentially an extension of the typical literacy block. Consequently, the library often felt like a secondary space, one that could quickly dissipate when more pressing needs or priorities arose.

However, while accountability discourses were powerful in shaping the space of the library, individuals were also active agents in constructing various discursive spaces. Librarians, students, and other actors in the library (including myself as the researcher) created spaces for literacy by the organization of the Firstspace, Secondspace, and
Thirdspace, all which operated dialectically. For example, in the creation of a “donated books” section of the library, where Amanda organized physical materials and created inviting labels for the newly organized shelves, she simultaneously produced a space of access and equity, where all students were permitted to borrow library books regardless of a missing library contract or overdue books. When students like Carla saved physical space by stretching out on the comfy chair, they were also simultaneously constructing a social space, one where they could enjoy a book with a friend. Mark’s emphasis on reading levels, and desire to be perceived as a reader, were in part brought into the library as a result of it being inherently connected to the other school spaces. Importantly, these discursive spaces were not unitary. Often, the partner reading described above was a calm, seemingly enjoyable time. Other times, highlighted in my conversations with Nikki and Mark, the social space created in the library was focused around regulating one another’s reading level. Ultimately, these discursive spaces were shifting and fluid.

Within these fluid social spaces, the library was often a space of enjoyment, where traditional notions of reading practices were disrupted. Utilizing the Mo Willems books—among others—in quite expert ways, students acted out voices, dramatized, and engaged in play fighting over the books. In doing so, they resisted what “typical” library reading looked like, using their agency to construct spaces that resisted adult authority in favor of an unofficial culture (Hall, 2011). During one particular interview with Nikki and Mark (2/16/2017 INT), they resisted my interview questions, played with the book, and instead constructed a space that was more informal and resistive of traditional reading practices. I characterized this event as a Thirdspace interruption, where instances
of subversion arose, though it did so in a playful manner, one that expertly used the book—a Firstspace material—to guide social moves.

In some ways, students were able to resist adult decision-making power and open up discursive spaces for play because of the lack of leveled texts and assessments in the library. Even though Secondspace discourses permeated the space with force, the lack of the physical levels—a Firstspace notion—was significant in opening up pockets where more fluid practices, and equitable reading opportunities, were possible.

In examining the spaces where students took up notions of play, clear implications for constructing transformative spaces emerged. One of Amanda’s learnings in transitioning from the role of the librarian to that of a third-grade teacher was that there was power in less regulated reading choices for students. She recounted to me how she moved away from having reading be solely based on levels in the classroom, after recognizing how powerful choice was for students in the library (9/29/2016 FN).

Amanda’s realization here was probably not unlike those of many classroom teachers, who would not expect that assessment-based discourses would enter a school library (a non-leveled space) so forcefully. Given this finding, there are opportunities to reflect on the implications of reading levels, and perhaps to shift practices across both classroom and library spaces. For example, perhaps instituting a “browsing” time in the classroom and considering the power of text selection and choice in the readerly identities that students construct across school spaces would be beneficial.

For the library in particular, the potential to construct it as a transformative space is clear. While this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which the library functioned similarly to the classroom, other library spaces diverge from this. Public and academic
libraries, for example, often function as spaces of exhibits or art installations. Organized in this way, libraries might open new possibilities for text selection and installations that move away from artificial and contrived holiday displays. For school libraries, spaces might be promoted that encourage tinkering, play, and open-ended learning with a variety of materials. In this conception, library time is no longer simply reading with a book. Instead, students can make meaning from a variety of different tools (from computers to lazer cutters) to pursue their own inquiries. Further implications for library spaces will be described more deeply in the sections that follow.

**Implications for Policy**

**Funding for Library Programs**

In an educational climate of increasing budget cuts, choices about what to fund are essential. Unfortunately, libraries are positioned as secondary to the larger educational system and are often not a priority in funding. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 initially spurred funding for library materials (Michie & Holton, 2005), first recognizing how essential to learning and exploration access to texts was. Despite this, the threats to libraries continue to be real, as Rodgers (2017) reports that “10 percent of the nation’s public schools and 51 percent of its charter schools don’t have libraries” (p. 16), with urban areas like Los Angeles reporting new budgets that would lay off library staff. Without funding, the libraries don’t have a librarian, and even if students do get to visit the library and check out books should a library exist without being staffed, they likely aren’t experiencing the flexible browsing sessions, nor do they receive instruction around digital literacies and digital citizenship.
As I have argued in this dissertation, the browsing sessions at City Partnership School are significant, as they offer fluidity of selection, movement, and engagement for students. It has been made evident that those are the favorite for both students and the librarian, as they are used as a reward and students are visibly and audibly disappointed when they do not occur, or when it is not a browsing day (e.g. fieldnotes 11/10/2016, 12/13/2017, 1/10/2017, 2/1/2017). Should libraries not receive funding and not be staffed, students will subsequently miss out on opportunities to browse in this manner.

**Library Standards**

Implications for programs being cut and de-funded are that students will only experience literacy instruction in their classrooms and will therefore miss out on these “other spaces” (Foucault, 1986) where literacy happens. After all, libraries were designed to be spaces where students not only engaged with texts and information, but also had opportunities to pursue their own inquiries. Over time, policy—specifically in the form of library standards—shifted and shaped the instruction in the library dramatically. Library standards for elementary schools first appeared in 1925 (Michie & Holton, 2005) as optional, with the intent to help school libraries foster curiosity and independence in students. Just as the 1950s and the launch of Sputnik incited many changes for American education, notably the “back to basics” movement, library standards were no exception. As stated in previous chapters, 1958 brought about funding for school libraries through the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), moving the libraries from a flexible hub for student inquiry to more structured spaces where students would learn research skills. Continual revisions occurred in 1960, 1969, 1975, 1988, 2007, and 2009 (Michie & Holton, 2005).
Each iteration of school library standards brought about new paradigms about what types of learning the space might be for, and how it should be used to ensure that students were prepared to meet the increasing demands of a more global, diverse society. These most recent versions of the standards, for instance, focused on informational literacies, independent research, and media integration. These shifting standards emphasized the importance of the space as a central hub in schools, one where students not only engaged in instruction, but were also given the freedom to explore their own inquiries through multimodal texts. This points to the importance of school libraries, and yet they are in danger of significant shifts, and disappearing altogether in some communities.

Therefore, library standards not only must continue to exist and be implemented across our schools, but they must be critically examined to ensure that students are indeed able to engage with a variety of literacy practices and texts in ways that support equity. For example, while the NYC Information Fluency Continuum (n.d.) positions the library as a “public forum” where students can pursue inquiries, the language in the standards also constructs a binary between what an “information-literate” student is, and what they are not. The “information fluent” reader, for example, privileges appropriate information and develops in a linear fashion, according to the standards, which outline the concrete steps that it takes in order to become information fluent. While encouraging inquiry, the process is simultaneously presented as a trajectory (New York City School Library System, n.d.), contradicting the very notion of inquiry itself. For example, the NYC Information Fluency Continuum (n.d.) prompts students to make connections between texts, explore texts, and use technology to locate information. This standard argues that
“an independent learner responds to and creates literary and artistic expressions, uses effective strategies for personal exploration of ideas, and reads on his or her own by choice” (New York City School Library System, n.d., p. 34). However, this is contingent on a diverse collection of texts, one that has an equitable representation of student backgrounds and knowledge. While possible and perhaps even likely in an elementary school library, the limited browsing periods and liminal nature of the space complicate this.

Policymakers, along with practitioners and researchers, must continue library standard revisions, adapting the language of the standards in efforts to meet the increasingly diverse populations of students in this country, and to provide with them with the texts, skills, and attitudes ready to succeed in schooled literacy. Ultimately, it is not enough to continue having standards, but they must undergo careful examination to ensure that that libraries maintain their core democratic principles. This requires deeper and more critically-informed connections and collaborations between policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.

**Implications for Librarian Preparation**

As the positioning of the school librarian continues to change and shift within the larger context of education, so much the ways in which school librarians are prepared for the field. Historically and currently, the American Library Association (ALA) has been responsible for the preparation and certification of school librarians, though specific requirements can vary between states (Church, 2011). These requirements for licensure have many different components, including administering programs, engaging in collaboration and leadership, understanding informational literacy, and understanding
curriculum and pedagogy. The inclusion of curriculum and pedagogy, presumably, emphasizes that the school librarian plays an active instructional role in 21st century schools (Church, 2011). In 2011, there were 39 nationally recognized school librarian preparation programs.

In efforts to preserve the library as a space where students can be the readers that they desire, librarians are needed who are able to provide a diversity of experiences and protect the democratic principles so essential to library experiences. As evidenced by the four focal students that I worked with, the diversity of experiences that they had while browsing in the library mattered to them. Students clearly favored browsing over reading responses, as one child anxiously asked on December 13th, 2017, “can we browse now?” (12/13/2017 FN, p. 1). One emphasis in school librarian preparation programs is around understanding and implementing digital literacy practices for students. As Preddy (2016) explains, digital literacy is an increasing consideration as we prepare students to interact with online global communities. While classrooms can certainly embed critical stances to literacy, including critiques of texts, often the responsibility for teaching ethical ways of engaging with technology is left to school librarians and/or media specialists. Preddy (2016) further states that “many policymakers lack awareness of the importance of digital citizenship, not fully realizing its existence and not fully realizing it must be intentionally taught” (p. 5). A closer connection between research and policy may help to narrow these discrepancies and demonstrate the importance of supporting quality librarian preparation programs.

Despite these calls for greater emphasis on digital literacy, the findings of this dissertation illuminate how often the literacy practices in the library center around the
material book. Students at City Partnership School did not experience digital learning, and yet, there continues to be an increasing call for librarians to do this work across the field. There is not agreement across the field—in research or in practice—about what role libraries play in literacy instruction. This discussion is even more complex when taking into account Amanda’s transition from the library to the classroom. In the beginning of the year, Amanda had an idea to teach coding in the library, but this dissipated as she transferred out of the space. The interests, priorities, and passions of people leave residue in lived spaces (Huysssen, 2003), while others transition out. The individuals who traverse space, therefore, are powerful in shaping those spaces. This dissertation shows how central the ideologies of the school librarian are in the space that is produced with the children, and ultimately, the types of literacy instruction and activities that the children have access to.

With increasing cuts to library programs and a dearth of candidates entering these positions, the opportunities for these spaces to continue creating opportunities for student inquiries are potentially becoming scarce. As classroom instruction continues to narrow in response to increasing accountability and assessment pressures (Olivant, 2015), alongside decreased funding for library programs, the diversity of literacy experiences that students can encounter in our nation’s schools also decrease. This includes the emphasis on digital literacy skills, called for in the field and yet simultaneously relegated to space that experiences cuts, shifts, and competing priorities. More than ever, a policy climate that protects libraries from disappearing is needed. To do that, more information about the transformative power of library spaces is required.
Implications for Research

I have argued that school libraries are spaces where students have agency and actively use this agency to construct spaces for themselves to be readers independently, as well as in social relationships with others. Despite arguing for the significance of school library spaces, libraries are still increasingly subject to decreased budgets, low staffing (Everhart, 2000a), and are often devalued in school spaces. If libraries continue to close or transition to part-time spaces (Everhart, 2000a), it may decrease the likelihood that research into these spaces is feasible, at least from the literacy studies field. Those libraries that are flourishing, and where students are active in producing spaces for themselves, have implications for education, literacy studies, and library science at large. Broadly, libraries can demonstrate the transformative potential of schools when people work together across a collection of spaces.

As stated in earlier chapters of this dissertation, most of the scholarly literature on school librarians has focused on the librarian, and not the student experience. Within this emphasis on the librarian, attention has been paid to descriptions of the roles and tasks that librarians perform (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000), and occasionally how this shapes their perception of the job. This focus on tasks, roles, and perceptions—while valuable—leaves out the very significant and unique experience that can only be documented through sustained time in the field and in-depth observation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) of the phenomena that is taking place. If we want to understand how student identities are constructed across spaces, more research into the student experience in these multiple spaces is essential.
Expansion to Other Sites and Perspectives

Therefore, taking an ethnographic methodology to other library spaces around the nation, and across various demographics of students, may demonstrate how the library is connected to their overall school experiences. Researching with librarians and students of varying social class, racial, linguistic, ability levels, and age backgrounds would help make this understanding clear. While library science has its own tradition of research, often using interview data with librarians and exploring their roles, more ethnographic work exploring the human experience (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), particularly the interactions of children (Corsaro, 1981), is needed. Additionally, library science has predominantly focused on libraries serving older students. Despite this dearth of information, early childhood literacy experiences are deeply essential to identity construction (Wohlwend, 2011), as students discover what they want to read, how they want to read, and in the process, what kind of reader they are going to be.

However, while expanding methodologies and populations of study are critical, the theoretical stances with which this work is approached are equally as essential. Most studies that look at school libraries are not approached from a socially situated literacy perspective. Therefore, literacy in these studies is often defined in more traditional ways, whereas a New Literacy Studies (NLS) framework defines literacy practices in social and cultural frameworks (Street, 2005), taking into account language and discourses. In order to see the potential of the library as a space for alternative forms of literacy engagements, there must be a widening of perspectives on what “counts” as literacy. A spatial perspective (Soja, 1996) seeks to further disrupt these seemingly straightforward practices, asking us not to dismiss interruptions to the seemingly normal discursive space,
but to privilege it in efforts to rethink the possibilities of space. Looking at identities as multi-layered and complex, constructed over many experiences over time (Moje & Luke, 2009) also complicates the literature in the field, where professional titles and descriptions of roles may not be sufficient to understand the human experience.

Dressman (1998) conducted one such study that took up the library as a site, and examined multiple sites from a spatial perspective, adding another layer of analysis to library science. In doing so, Dressman (1998) examined the human experience, both of students as well as librarians, to offer different perspectives about how a library can be produced, and the important choices that librarians make in these productions. Dressman (1998) began this work, illustrating how people, materials, and spatial practices can open up, and close down, opportunities for literacy. For this dissertation, I followed Dressman (1998) by taking up a literacy studies framework, specifically a spatial literacies framework, and applied it to libraries as a site for research in efforts to understand (in new ways) how the library was being constructed.

While this work has illuminated future directions and needs for research, it has only scratched the surface. Extending my dissertation work to other library sites and “other spaces” (Foucault, 1986) for literacy beyond libraries, is promising in painting a more robust picture of what happens in these spaces, and the significance of these spaces for the teachers and students who inhabit them. Ultimately, understanding the power of libraries as spaces for literacy, identity, and inquiry has implications for how these spaces get enacted through policy and practice. This, in turn, has the potential to inform other spaces that have often been neglected as spaces for literacy research, such as hallways and school cafeterias, but spaces which nonetheless shape the educational experience of a
child. In considering the entire school as a networked institution with many linked spaces, there is room for further exploring the transformative potential of schools when committed people work together across multiple spaces.

**Implications for a Spatial Lens**

While new research sites are needed, approaching this work from a spatial perspective also adds complexity and nuance to the work. In positioning the library as an “other space” (Foucault, 1986), one distinct from and yet networked to other spaces within the school, there is the potential to produce new ways of knowing that continue to deeply interrogate power, literacy, and knowledge. The library as a heterotopia, one where information never stops building over time, can therefore be a space of resistance despite always being connected to the dominant order of schooling. Heterotopias, by definition, are permeable spaces, largely because of their inherent relationships to other spaces.

Taking up a spatial perspective in this work ultimately helps to illuminate how the equally important dimensions (Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace) contribute to the production of knowledge, power, and space. In advocating for a focus on Thirdspace, Soja (1996) prompts us to think about the interruptions to discursive space, such as through the instances of play, might be reframed. In taking up this perspective, I was able to focus part of my analysis on the instances of play that I observed, which was not necessarily something that I expected to find from this work. Breaking down the binary notion of the library as a contained room, positioning it instead as a networked space with permeable boundaries, foregrounded the ways that students used the fluid space and time to their advantages and towards their desires.
Exploring from a Gender and Race Lens

With having only several focal students, this work could also be expanded to look more deeply at the gendered and racialized experiences of students (Miller, 2005), particularly at different age groups. For example, gender-focused research often demonstrates that girls are less reprimanded than boys in school settings. Although James, for example, was discussed as someone who was smart and made good choices, he was redirected for “not having a book in his hand” and for moving around the room (2/1/2017 Map) despite doing so in efforts to get the book that he wanted. Neither Nikki or Carla were redirected for these same issues during the duration of my data collection. It could be that Deborah perceived movement of male students differently, as she implicitly bought into the discourse that female students need or desire less movement. In other words, the students and librarian adopted the dominant notion that there was a “correct” way to be a reader and organize the body in ways that signified this (Luke, 1992). As many literacy scholars have demonstrated, there are particular ways of “doing girl” and “doing boy” (Wohlwend, 2012), and children learn these practices, in part, through school (Yoon, 2014). While these practices may not have been initially learned in the library, they are taken up and reproduced, both by librarians and students themselves. Amanda’s statement that “this is so funny, but these [one shelf] are all girl books” (9/8/2016 FN, p. 9) for example, demonstrated the subtle ways in which dominant notions of what girls and boys like become concretized over time. Bringing these lenses to a new space (the school library) will undoubtedly enrich and complicate the current narratives, where girls like Nikki are able to resist books typically marked for girls, and boys like James are permitted to engage in play. In understanding and explicating why
young girls choose, or do not choose, to take up “good girl” (Miller, 2005) personas, we may begin to disrupt dominant discourses about who can be a reader, and how they become marked as a good reader.

Similarly, the intersections of gender and race merit a more substantive exploration and conversation. Both Mark (of Hispanic descent) and James (of African descent) were marked and read in particular ways. James, despite being an advanced reader, was still reprimanded by Deborah for moving about the library (2/1/2017 Map) while others were not. Understanding how and why boys of color were constructed in particular ways in the library demands additional attention. Conversely, the fact that Carla was a white, middle-class, female student who embodied a “good girl” (Miller, 2005) persona with almost no redirection from adults merits interrogation, as it was not only her reading level that afforded her more flexibility in the space, but her gendered and racialized identity as well.

Nikki, while positioned as an advanced reader, yet one who often resisted “schooled literacy” behaviors (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) like sitting still and raising her hand, often seemed to be viewed as odd by adults at City Partnership School. Gender identities are not universal, but are fluid (Wohlwend, 2012); Nikki’s interest in non “girly” texts was one example that began to uncover the many ways in which girls are encouraged to be girls. Students can both reproduce these gender norms, or they can challenge them (Yoon, 2014), and Nikki’s case study begins to illuminate the small but significant ways in which she attempted to resist dominant gender norms, both in text selection as well as resistance to “good girl” behaviors, such as not participating in read-alouds and not sitting as directed.
More examination into these focal students from a lens that positions gendered and racialized identities as complex and fluid is needed and would add to the initial findings in this dissertation study. Subsequently, to understand how students navigate the library according to their gender and race (and other identity markers such as class, ability, and language), a studying of space is necessary, as these identity markers are in part produced through interactions across spaces (Leander & Sheehy, 2004).

Ultimately, the lack of research exploring the role of school librarians in constructing spaces for inquiry, choice, and enjoyment may in fact lead to decreased funding and career opportunities for school librarians, which in turn impacts student access to texts and literacy engagements (Everhart, 2013). Therefore, implications for further research are to continue expanding school library research from a diversity of perspectives in efforts to bring more tension and complexity to the conversation. Rather than “descriptive assessments” (Nitecki, 2011) and other work exploring roles and responsibilities of school librarians, I also argue for new ways of positioning literacy to be integrated into this conversation, as more critical and sociocultural stances would enrich conversations within the field of library science.

Implications for Practice

Supporting Libraries as a Learning Space

Perhaps most significantly, there are implications for schools in considering how City Partnership School’s library might offer insights to libraries and “other spaces” (Foucault, 1986) broadly. While research and policy can help to make overarching decisions about the future of school libraries, it is the day-to-day decisions that most
implicate how the space can be constructed, and the experiences that students will therefore have. As school budgets continue to dissipate, programs like the library (along with art, music, etc.) are seeing budget cuts nationwide. These cuts have significant implications for the students, librarians, and other school staff to which these spaces matter, particularly for those in underserved communities.

In urban areas, physical space is often a concern. At City Partnership School, the library was occasionally needed as a testing space, and at times was shared with additional classes, like music. While these decisions may be unavoidable, at City Partnership School, there were consequences for the students to whom the library was important, for example, on February 3rd, 2017 when library had to take place in the classroom, due to a testing schedule. It was clear that both Deborah, and the students, were visibly unhappy about this change, as it means that browsing was pushed off until the following session (2/3/2017 FN, p. 2). Given the large-scale constraints of our educational system, libraries are typically constructed as non-essential—they can be physically moved or restructured at a moment’s notice. While perhaps unavoidable, there are implications for this continual shifting of the space, particularly for the librarians and students to whom browsing is a coveted time.

Therefore, rather than construct the library as an extension of the classroom, one that is easily dispensable when other priorities (such as testing) come into play, the library should be thought of as a valuable learning space in its own right, one which complements the classroom but cannot be replaced by the classroom because the goals and ethos are inherently different. Positioning it as an “other space” (Foucault, 1986), the library does hold power, but this power is fluid, shifting across time and space as both
students and the librarian construct identities as readers, which in turn shape—and are shaped by—the affordances and constraints of the space. Because students don’t have to discipline their bodies in the same manner as in the classroom, the spaces they traverse may be more fluid, as they are often permitted to make those choices based on their preferences. These movements and affordances, however, are not only in jeopardy because of school policies and priorities, but accountability discourses as well.

Where classrooms continue to narrow across the country due to assessment and accountability pressures (Olivant, 2015), school libraries have the potential to be a more fluid space (Leander et al., 2010), one that allows for activity. In other words, the library doesn’t have to be a passive space, but rather, one that encourages innovation—both in expanding ways of teaching, but also considering new ways to be a reader and to engage in literacy. Implications for libraries are to allow for these shifts, and embrace the evolution of literacy materials, such as digital materials and popular culture texts, instead of limiting what can count as a text, and what counts as successful reading (for example, encouraging volume of reading per certificates, evidenced on 2/1/2017). The library as a space should not mirror the classroom, but rather complement it. It is up to school administrators, teachers, and the librarian him/herself to ensure that the library is designed to serve the teachers and students in that specific context. Ensuring that the library is a space of transformation, where all students have access to texts and reading engagements, requires that the space be supported.

One possible way to design a school library is to return to framing it as a “learning commons” (Mueller, 2015), a space that is collaborative and open. Amanda, for example, early in the year, expressed her desire for teachers to use the library as a
resource, one that could offer professional texts and support, rather than a space that operated in a silo. Before being moved to the classroom, she had discussed drafting a note to send to teachers to describe the different resources in the library that they might wish to use (8/31/2016 FN). As libraries continue to disappear or find their work shifting, approaching the library in a more creative and collaborate form may be a viable solution. In doing so, new spaces for teacher inquiry and learning might also be created, where staff from across the school can consider the many ways in which students have literate lives.

When possible, other spaces should be used (or alternated) with libraries so that the libraries sessions aren’t the first thing sacrificed when a testing space is needed. Similarly, when positions within the school need to be filled, working to ensure that librarians aren’t the first school personnel to be removed—like Amanda was—cannot only preserve the importance of the space, but also communicates the wider significance of libraries to students, school staff, and the community. As Amanda said, even though she understands why this happened, she still can’t help but feel that “it’s just saying, well anybody can go in there and do that” (9/29/2016 INT, p. 2). Documenting and theorizing about the potential of libraries as transformative spaces may help ensure that students are more conscious of these implications.

**Continuing Professional Development for Librarians**

One key finding from this dissertation was how significant and yet different the library, as a space, was for the students who traversed it. Each student, through unique literacy practices, constructed social and discursive spaces that varied. For James, who felt constrained by reading levels, the library gave him time to read what he truly loved.
Nikki chooses to carve out quiet spaces within the library to read independently. Mark, on the other hand, was permitted to browse in the library in ways that he was discouraged from doing in other school spaces, offering him a sense of flexibility and room for his own agency. Rather than provide narrow parameters, such as what content is appropriate for readers, or how a reader should maintain or control their body, ensuring that librarians feel free to allow students to engage as they choose is paramount in constructing the space as fluid and open. Providing opportunities for librarians to talk about their observations, roadblocks, and solutions with one another—as teachers often do—is something that, as professionals, they deserve.

As too often is the case, however, professional development for school librarians is often siloed and done outside of the school site, although more attention is being paid to the value of having professional learning opportunities, even when informal, and structured within the school (Harvey, 2013). Therefore, professional learning opportunities for school librarians require continual examination, both in format and content. Luke and Kapitzke (1999), for example, contend that current work around print literacies is no longer enough for the changing media landscapes that students will increasingly encounter in their lives. In another piece, Harvey (2013) recounts how he, as the school librarian, effectively took the lead on professional development around 21st century learning, which was housed within the school building and based on the immediate context. Also touching on school-based professional development, as Harada (2016) demonstrates, student learning can be positively impacted when teachers and librarians have opportunities to collaborate to support student work. School librarians, in fact, are often uniquely positioned to be integral parts of school professional learning
teams. Harada’s (2016) work demonstrates how librarians, when able and encouraged to collaborate with teachers and students, can add depth and support to student research projects, particularly around retrieving information and evaluating sources.

Librarians can play a significant role in demonstrating to teachers and students how to access, examine, and engage with different sources of information. However, this requires ongoing professional development, as well as opportunities for librarians and teachers to share with, and learn from, one another. Particularly in a context where inquiry is often edged out of other curricular areas, the library could function as a collaborative and transformative space where inquiry is more feasible and where librarians and teachers might work together towards common goals. Indeed, this was a commitment that Amanda felt compelled to explore by inviting teachers to share and use the professional resources located in the library (8/31/2016 FN), which unfortunately was postponed due to her shifting role.

Change can bring about tension, and the library as an institution is rapidly shifting as notions of what literacy, inquiry, and research mean also shift. Thus, more professional development around how to engage with these new literacies is needed for librarians, so that they can prepare students for this evolving social world. Simultaneously, constructing formats for librarians to share their own knowledge, inquiries, and successes with school staff may assist in forging connections and encouraging deeper collaborations across spaces. A renewed focus on critical practices, new knowledge, and pedagogy for school libraries is not only called for (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999), but has the power to transform the space.
**Continue Expanding Notions of Reading**

More broadly, I believe that this dissertation introduces implications for literacy paradigms both inside and outside the library. As Luke and Kapitzke (1999) contend, libraries are sites “par excellence” (p. 467) for exploring new literacies, as the notion of “being literate” can be reinvented in the library through multiliteracies, critical literacies, digital literacies, and visual literacies. The exploration and integration of new literacies into libraries subsequently requires a reshaping of our paradigms about what counts as literacy and reading.

What is the impact of these narrow reading paradigms on students? For example, the infiltration of reading levels into the library, spurred by both students and the librarians, solidifies and strengthens traditional notions of schooled literacy (Cook-Gumperz, 1986), rather than constructing the library as a space where many engagements are possible. Only through rethinking who we mark as “literate” can we truly understand the possibilities of the space.

This dissertation pushes back on notions of literacy as solely constructed through text and illustrates how powerful other forms of literacy can be, such as those constructed through play (Dyson, 2003; Yoon, 2014). After all, the library was originally positioned, and it still positioned, as a space for inquiry (New York City School Library System, n.d.), a space that deliberately does not mirror the classroom. However, pressures that come from accountability and assessments have made this very unlikely in practice—and these pressures are both brought in by librarians, but also by students, who very quickly enter and adopt those discourses.
By approaching literacy in the library from a sociocultural and critical approach, for example, it becomes possible to understand and reframe the variety of ways in which students engage in literacy. Positioning literacy as socially constructed (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1982) not only emphasizes and values the communicative nature of language, but also pushes back on literacy as only being an interaction between the reader and a text. A critical stance (Janks, 2009), too, resists dominant notions of literacy, focusing on how literacy might begin to disrupt binaries between who has power and who does not, and who “has” literacy.

In approaching literacy from a sociocultural and critical stance, browsing sessions have the potential to become positioned as essential to students’ literacy development, evidenced in James’ enjoyment with Mo Willems book and Mark’s ability to feel successful with books in the library. As we widen what “counts” as literacy, the library as an “unleveled space” might emerge, constructing a Thirdspace grounded in choice and in children’s unofficial culture of play (Hall, 2011). While I have discussed the importance of librarians to receive training around new and emerging forms of literacy, I also argue that exposure to other paradigms, some of which may challenge librarians, is needed (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999). While this may destabilize the traditional power dynamics between librarians as possessing knowledge and students as receiving knowledge (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999), new stances toward what literacy is can shape and reshape the space in ways that allow for greater student voice and agency.

In a rapidly changing world, where definitions of literacy evolve, taking up these different perspectives—and different research methodologies—may nudge educators to
consider literacy in more complex ways. The more complex the phenomena of study is, the more nuanced and complex theories and methodologies we must explore.

**Limitations of this Study**

I selected a case study for this dissertation because I believe in the value of exploring one case in depth in order to unpack the messiness of one school site (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). My work adds to a body of research on how literacies might be considered as occurring not just in school, or in homes, but as circulating throughout many unexplored spaces. Even in studying one space, I drew implications for school libraries, and other spaces in schools, from this work.

One clear limitation of this study is that I did not collect data for an extended period of time. Should I have been in City Partnership School for several years, I would have had access to spatial changes over a longer period of time and might have seen more significant shifts. Examining how new staff members and new students, for example, positioned themselves within the space over several years would add great depth and complexity to this work.

Because this work is situated in early childhood, the study also does not address growing concerns for older students as they prepare to transition to university education and academic library systems (Cahoy, 2002). Additional research into the impact of the library space on older students, their literate identities, and the role of school libraries in supporting older students would strengthen the implications of this work. This study is unique because both Amanda and Deborah were trained as teachers, and not school librarians. For this reason, their approaches to the work and space may diverge from a
librarian formerly trained in library science or as a school library media specialist (Johnston, Huber, Dupuis, O'Hair, O'Hair, & Sandidge, 2012). The experiences and expertise of Amanda and Deborah should therefore not be taken to stand for all school librarians.

In conceptualizing space as a network of relations (Leander et al., 2010), a final limitation of this study is the singular focus on a school library. In future work, I would like to explore different school library sites to examine connections and divergences in how literacy in the library is conceptualized, and subsequently how students and librarians identify in the space. Ultimately, this study should not function in isolation, but should position the school as an entire organism. With this dissertation as a starting point, there is a need to think about links across spaces so that this study alone doesn’t function in isolation. This study has lessons about the potential of libraries to offer meaningful experiences to students, despite the many constraints and tensions in place.

**Conclusion to Chapter**

Ultimately, the library is a space of immense possibility, and yet simultaneously rife with contradictions. As our educational context continues to shift, the library, alongside classrooms, must also shift as the world around it increasingly changes. As information and access to information changes, libraries as institutions must be reframed, at times, meaning that they become places and multimodal spaces (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999).

Libraries will likely continue to be liminal spaces, where competing ideas about literacy, learning, and children circulate. More work in understanding these spaces is
needed, as is an educational climate—and political climate—that privileges spaces such learning spaces. Ultimately, students are who we are serving in school libraries. By allowing play, giving students space to resist schooled literacies (especially if they must adhere to these in their classrooms), and accepting and privileging a wide range of ways to “be a reader,” we can construct library spaces that enrich the lives of the students we intend to serve. Not only that, but we can view schools as collections of spaces, that when considered in tandem, might open other spaces for inquiry, student choice, and literacy.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Glossary

**Discourses:** Literacy scholars argue that language must be analyzed within its social context. Each context has a particular Discourse (big D), which encompasses its actual language as well as the cultural models it is couched in, whereas discourse (little d) refers specifically to the linguistic elements that are intertwined with each Discourse (Gee, 2000-2001).

**Identity:** I draw on Moje and Luke’s (2009) metaphor of identity as position, which examines discourse and narrative, but also considers activities and interactions, artifacts, space and time, and embodied difference as shaping social identities over time. Identities are fluid, contextual, socially situated, and constructed through talk and text (Moje & Luke, 2009).

**Inclusion:** In this dissertation, I refer to inclusion of literacy practices as the various ways that students might engage with text verbally, bodily, textually, and in other forms. Inclusive literacies ensure that all students can fully participate in discussions and other activities at hand (Comber, 2013).

**Inquiry:** Conceptions of inquiry position knowledge as constructed actively, rather than transmitted from teacher to student in a linear manner. Inquiry involves both process and content of learning, and typically involves students pursuing their own questions with an intention of a deeper learning experience (Brown, 2012). In spaces of inquiry, students are seen as having agency and ownership in the learning process.

**Literacy:** I take up the definition of literacy from New Literacy Studies (NLS), which argues that literacy is socially constructed and must be examined in contrast, rather than
skills-based and linear. NLS scholars have argued that literacy is ideological and is laden with power hierarchies (Street, 2005; Janks, 2009). Additionally, I adopt the notion that individuals utilize literacy in every aspect of their daily life.

**Other Space:** The concept of other spaces draws from Foucault’s (1986) conception of heterotopia, which are spaces that are juxtaposed with other spaces (just as we might juxtapose a word with another word). Foucault (1986) argues that all spaces are cultural and historical in their origin. Other spaces, then, function in relation to all of the space that remains. In this case, a library is defined by what it is not—it is neither a standardized classroom nor is it the home or community.

**Space:** Rather than the view of spaces as static and contained, spatial theorists (Soja, 1996; Sheehy, 2010; Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010) argue that space is both a product and process of socially dynamic relations (Leander & Sheehy, 2004). Spaces are both socially and culturally produced. Spaces have complex histories, geographies, and are *lived.*
Appendix B

Template for Fieldnotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Location/Event:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>Summary:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Appendix C

Excerpt from Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-Category</th>
<th>Specific Codes &amp; Appearances</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schooled Notions of Literacy in the Library [SNL]</td>
<td>Spaces of Academic Capital</td>
<td>School literacies; listening attentively to story (11/9/ FN, p. 2)</td>
<td>Schooled literacies is a concept from Cook-Gumperz (1986) that has to do with students engaging and performing literacy in ways that adhere to the dominant notions privileged in schools. When we say that a student displays &quot;schooled literacies,&quot; it means they are responding and engaging in ways that they're read to be acceptable (then shifting their own practices as such).</td>
<td>11/9 FN (p. 1), Mark shows that he is extremely attentive to the story, is sitting in &quot;star&quot; position, and looks back towards me in efforts to be validated for his performance as a reader. Another example of this is when he received a ticket for entering the library quietly and sitting at the rug right away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Approval</td>
<td>Performance as a good reader, despite answers being &quot;off&quot; (11/22 FN, p.1)</td>
<td>Similar to schooled literacies, many students seek approval in the library space. When they perform these schooled literacies, they are often validated (through praise or tangible rewards).</td>
<td>For Mark, validation of his literacy practices is very important. Because he is marked as a lower reader by nature of his reading level, it seems as though he often compensates for this by demonstrating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers of Proficiency</td>
<td>Ability grouping (low) (11/22 FN, p. 3)</td>
<td>This term refers to tangible markers of proficiency, such as reading levels, and being &quot;assigned&quot; to various levels of reading. Although the library doesn't use leveled texts, the students often brought this notion in with them.</td>
<td>Mark asks, “Nikki, can you read this?” to which she responded, “Yeah, I’m a level J.” Mark replied, “Well, I’m a level D” (1/25 Map)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluid Literacy Practices in the Library [FLP]</strong></td>
<td>Love of Books</td>
<td>Settles on Elephant &amp; Piggie book after moving around the space (1/10 FN, p. 4)</td>
<td>I use this code to talk strictly about how students—verbally and behaviorally—seem to love reading. When students cite particular books that they love, and show a strong inclination to read, I would categorize it as a connection to reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy as a Social Activity</strong></td>
<td>Reading as a social activity (1/19 INT, p. 8)</td>
<td>This concept is from New Literacy Studies (NLS), which argues that literacy is not a set of autonomous skills but is constructed in particular contexts and in conjunction with others.</td>
<td>Carla demonstrates that she is social in her literacy practices when she selects books to read with others, acting out texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces of Social Capital—Playful Literacies</td>
<td>Silliness—not performing (1/12 FN, p. 2 &amp; 3; 1/24 FN, p. 3)</td>
<td>In observing this play, I consider Bakhtin’s notion of carnival, a chaotic, joyous, and often subversive time. As I consider the play fighting that James engaged in as “way of breaking down barriers, of overcoming power inequalities and hierarchies” (Cohen, 2011, p. 178).</td>
<td>During an observation on 1/10/2017, James was observed moving freely about the library space… reading with partners, talking to me, making statements to friends, selecting books (1/10/2017 FN, p. 3).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Across Space [MS]</td>
<td>Freedom of Mobility</td>
<td>Freedom of movement/space (10/27 INT, p. 3)</td>
<td>Mobility across spaces draws from Zacher (2009) and many others who look at the way that students traverse different types of social space throughout their daily life.</td>
<td>For Carla, as a reader who is praised for displaying the correct behaviors, she is able to traverse space with ease. When she says that she is &quot;happy&quot; in the library but also in classroom spaces, she demonstrates that being marked as a strong reader allows her more flexibility across multiple literacy spaces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Excerpt from Student Interview

This interview will ask you about some of the places that you like in the library, and what it means to be a good reader in the library. I will also invite you to draw or sketch some of your thoughts. We will talk for about 20 minutes. You are free to stop the interview at any time.

**Student:** Mark  
**Date:** 11/10/2016  
**Time:** 9:00-9:23am

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alyson: Mark, now I’m going to ask you to add one more thing to your picture. Can you add what it looks like to read in the library?</th>
<th>[Mark adds someone reading to his picture]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark:</strong> He’s sitting down in the chair, and reading.</td>
<td>[SNL] (independent reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyson: Sitting down in the chair and reading… Are there other ways to read in the library?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark:</strong> Read on the floor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alyson: Mmm hmm. And, what does a good reader do in the library?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark:</strong> Reads a lot… And, and, they read hard books.</td>
<td>[SNL] (challenging oneself)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyson: Read hard books? What does that mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark:</strong> That means, you know, you know every book but you don’t know one book. So you have to read that book over and over.</td>
<td>[SNL] (repeated reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyson: But, I think that’s a great idea to write books with happy words. I like that. So, Mark, how do you feel when you walk into the school library?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark:</strong> Good.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alyson: Why do you feel good?

Mark: Because, I like reading books. And, my mom said if you read books you get more smarter with writing. And more, more like, like you can read to students, and you can read to your brother, and to your other brother, and to your sisters.

[SNL] (reading books makes you smarter)
Appendix E

Librarian Interview Questions

This interview will ask you about your position at City Partnership School, and some of the specific activities that you do as the school librarian. The interview will last approximately 40-45 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to stop the interview at any time, and there will be no adverse effects to you. What you say in this interview is confidential and other parties or stakeholders (including parents, administrators, etc.) in the project will not find out what you said.

Do you agree to be audiotaped for this interview?

☐ Yes
☐ No

1. Would you mind giving me a tour of the library, and talk through how and why you have set it up?

2. What is it like to be the school librarian at City Partnership School?

3. Can you describe what the transition from classroom teacher, to school librarian, has been like so far?

4. Can you give me a specific example of the way that your role has changed since you took this position? What about an example of how the roles are similar?

5. In what ways, if any, has your history as a classroom teacher influenced the ways in which you teach in the library?

6. What is the typical structure of your day as the school librarian? How does it compare to being a classroom teacher?

7. What do you see as some of the benefits to having more flexibility in your instruction?

   a. What are some of the drawbacks to this increased flexibility?
8. Could you tell me about some of your experiences in planning instruction for your students in the library?

9. What is the difference between teaching all students in the school throughout the day, and teaching one class all day long?

10. How do you describe your job to others?

11. Can you tell me about the library standards that you use when planning daily activities?

12. What types of activities do students typically engage in during their library visits?

13. Can you give me a specific example of a memorable literacy activity that you have seen students engage with in the library?

14. How do you typically see these three to five students (focal students) participate in library activities? What are some of the ways that they engage with the materials and each other?

15. Can you describe what drew you to integrating inquiry-based types of experiences into the library?

16. Can you give me a specific example of a way that you have seen inquiry-based learning be successful (either in the past or this year)?

17. Do you feel that inquiry-based teaching is more feasible in the library than in the general classroom? Why or why not?

18. In what ways might the library space/structure make allow for inquiry? What sort of pressures do classroom teachers have that makes this type of teaching more challenging?

19. What do you see as your role, the role of the librarian, in promoting literacy at City Partnership School?

20. How do you define literacy? In other words, what does it mean to you?

21. What does your ideal library look like? What is in it, and how do students use it?
a. How does the library at City Partnership School match up, or not, with your vision of an ideal library?

22. Do you have particular expectations for how students enter and exit the space? What are those expectations?

23. Do you feel responsible for the literacy learning of students?

24. It seems that the library is often used for many purposes (parent breakfast, after-school, etc.). How do you feel about this space being used in so many different ways? How does it impact your role as the teacher of library?

25. How do you determine if a student is successful in the library? What are some specific skills, knowledge, behaviors that you might look for?

26. Do you find that successful students in the library are also those who are most successful in the classroom? Why or why not?
Appendix F

Student Interview Questions

This interview will ask you about some of the things that you do in your school library, including your likes and dislikes, and activities that you participate in. I will also invite you to draw or sketch some of your thoughts. We will talk for about 20 minutes. You are free to stop the interview at any time.

Are you comfortable with me recording this interview?

☐ Yes
☐ No

1. I’m going to give you a camera, and I would like you to take five pictures of the library. You can take a picture of anything that you want.
   a. Can you tell me about the pictures that you took?
   b. How did you choose what to take pictures of?

2. Please draw a picture of the library. You can include anything that you like to do in the library and anything that you use (books or other materials).
   a. Can you tell me about your picture?

2. Do you like the library? Why or not?

3. What would you change about the library?

4. What is different about the library and your classroom?
   a. How do you feel about the library and your classroom being different?
   b. Do you wish that they were more similar? Why or why not?

5. Can you draw what it looks like to read in the library?
   a. Can you tell me about your picture?

6. What types of books do you choose in the library? Can you show me where you normally select books from and why?
a. If you could read anything, what would it be?

b. Do you normally get to choose the books that you want when you are checking out in the library? Why or why not?

7. What does a good reader do in the library? What about in your classroom?

8. Who can be a good reader in the library?
   a. Are those same students good readers in the classroom?

9. How do you feel when you walk into the school library? Why do you feel that way?

10. How do you feel when you walk out of the school library? Why do you feel that way?
Appendix G

Librarian Informed Consent

**Title:** The School Library as an Other Space: A Case Study Inquiry into Literacy and Identity

**Researcher:** Alyson Rumberger, Teachers College, 206-718-9448

---

**INTRODUCTION:** You are being invited to participate in this research study called “The School Library as an Other Space: A Case Study Inquiry into Literacy and Identity.” You qualify to take part in this research study due to your position as a school librarian. You, and a small group of children, are being invited to participate in this study and it will last for approximately a semester (4 months).

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?** This study is being done to determine what types of literacy practices students and school librarians engage with in a school library. I will also be investigating the possible implications of the library (as a place for literacy) on student identities as readers and writers.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to participate, I will be in your library space weekly for approximately four months. I will attend a first grade session and a second grade session. Throughout my visits, I will be observing three to five focal students, and will also by analyzing any written work that they complete.

Additionally, I will interview you four times (approximately once per month). During the interview, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs about literacy and what you envision for the school library. These interviews will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is written down the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The interview will take approximately forty-five minutes. You will be given a pseudonym or false name/de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential. Each interview will last for approximately 40 minutes, and will take place in the library.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in your daily life. However, there are some risks to consider:

You might feel uncomfortable reflecting on your teaching practice during interviews, and/or having an observer in the room while you are teaching. However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don’t want to talk about.
You may have a potential loss of confidentiality, as I will be sharing my findings with other educators and university faculty. However, the name of you, the students, and your school will not be identified.

The researcher will minimize risks to this study by:

The researcher will precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

You may stop the interviews or turn off the recorder at any time. You may also ask the researcher to delete certain sections of an interview recording. You do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don’t want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of library studies to better understand effective ways to teach literacy in the library.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate in this study. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when you have completed the four interviews and the researcher has conducted weekly observations of library sessions, lasting for approximately 4 months. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven’t finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY: The researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING: Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don’t wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this study.
_____ I give my consent to be recorded ________________________________

Signature

_____ I do not consent to be recorded ________________________________

Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

____ I consent to allow written and audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting

or at a conference outside of Teachers College

____________________________

Signature

_____ I do not consent to allow written and audio taped materials viewed outside of

Teachers College Columbia University

____________________________

Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY? If you have any
questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the researcher,
Alyson Rumberger, at 206-718-9448 or at atr2125@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you
should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics
committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at
Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002.
The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers
College, Columbia University.
PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.

- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.

- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Print name: ____________________________ Date: ________________
Signature: ____________________________
Appendix H

Parental Permission Form

**Title**: The School Library as an Other Space: A Case Study Inquiry into Literacy and Identity

**Researcher**: Alyson Rumberger, Teachers College, 206-718-9448

**INTRODUCTION**: Your child is being invited to participate in this research study called “The School Library as an Other Space: A Case Study Inquiry into Literacy and Identity.” Your child qualifies to take part in this research study because they attend weekly library visits with a school librarian. A small group of children (and the school librarian) are invited to participate in the study, and it will last for approximately one semester (four months).

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?** This study is being done to determine what types of literacy practices students and school librarians engage with in a school library. I will also be investigating the possible implications of the library (as a place for literacy) on how students see themselves as readers and writers.

**WHAT WILL MY CHILD BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE THAT MY CHILD CAN TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?** If you decide to allow your child to take part in this study, I will be making weekly library visits for approximately four months. Throughout my visits, I will be observing your child (and several other focal students), and will also by analyzing any written or artistic work that they complete while in the library.

Additionally, I will interview your child two times, for approximately 20 minutes each. During the interview, they will be asked to draw and talk to me about their experiences, feelings, and attitudes about coming to the library. I will ask them to talk to me about what they like to read, and how this compares to their experiences in their classrooms. Both interviews will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is written down the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish your child to be audio-recorded, your child will not be able to participate. Your child will be given a pseudonym or false name in order to keep their identity confidential. Each interview will take place in the library.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN MY CHILD EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that your child may experience are not greater than your child would ordinarily encounter in your daily life. However, there are some risks to consider:

Your child might feel uncomfortable with me photocopying his/her work or with audiotaping. However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you
don’t want to talk about. If your child does not want me to photocopy particular samples of his/her work, I will not.

Your may have a potential loss of confidentiality, as I will be sharing my findings with other educators and university faculty. However, the name of your child, the librarian, and school will not be identified.
The researcher will minimize risks to this study by:

The researcher will precautions to keep your child’s information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing his/her identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

Reminding your child that he/she may stop the interviews or turn off the recorder at any time. Your child may also ask the researcher to delete certain sections of an interview recording. Your child does not have to answer any questions or divulge anything that he/she does not want to talk about. He/she can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN MY CHILD EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to your child for participating in this study.

WILL MY CHILD BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You and your child will not be paid to participate in this study. There are no costs to you or your child for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN MY CHILD LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS? The study is over when your child has completed the two interviews and the researcher has conducted weekly observations of library sessions, lasting for approximately 4 months. However, your child can leave the study at any time even if it is not completed.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENTIALITY: The researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your child’s real name with their pseudonym. Regulations require that research data concerning children be kept for five years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your child’s name or any identifying information about your child will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the researcher.
CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING: Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission for your child to be recorded. If you decide that you don’t wish your child be recorded, they will not be able to participate in this research study.

______I give my consent for my child to be recorded ____________________________ Signature

_____ I do not consent for my child to be recorded _____________________________ Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY CHILD’S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

____ I consent to allow my child’s written and audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College

_________________________ Signature

_____ I do not consent to allow my child’s written and audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University

_________________________ Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY? If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the researcher, Alyson Rumberger, at 206-718-9448 or at atr2125@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.
STUDENT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the investigator. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.

- I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary. I may refuse to allow my child to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty. I understand that my child may refuse to participate without penalty.

- The investigator may withdraw my child from the research.

- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to allow my child to continue participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.

- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies my child will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to allow my child participate in this study.

Child’s name: ______________________________________________________

Print Parent or guardian’s name: ______________________________________

Parent or guardian’s signature: ______________________________________

Date: ____________________