The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Education

THE PICTUREBOOK PROJECT: A META/ETHNOGRAPHICALLY INFORMED CASE STUDY ON THE AESTHETIC RESPONSES OF CHILD READERS AT AN URBAN COMMUNITY CENTER

A Dissertation in
Curriculum & Instruction

by

Laura Anne Hudock

© 2018 Laura Anne Hudock

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2018
The dissertation of Laura Anne Hudock was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw  
Professor of Education (Language & Literacy Education)  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Patrick Shannon  
Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Education (Language & Literacy Education)

Daniel D. Hade  
Associate Professor Emeritus of Education (Language & Literacy Education)

Christine Thompson  
Professor Emeritus of Art Education

Rose Mary Zbiek  
Department Head, Curriculum & Instruction

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
Numerous twenty-first century picturebooks engender literacy practices that not only coax critical analysis of craft and narrative structures, but also welcome innovation and exploration of their design affordances. Certain titles and open-ended ways of transaction embedded in a socially situated reading experience promote reader responses that deviate from English Language Arts standards that privilege print-centric texts as imparter of authoritative meaning while undervaluing lived experiences of individual child readers and social constructivism. Instead, an underappreciated "aesthetic impulse" prevails among these picturebooks (Sipe, 2008b). This study draws on the embodied aesthetic experiences of elementary-aged readers occasioned during a pragmatic intervention (Rosenblatt, 1985; Heath, 1982), for such enriching perceptual experiences extends beyond children’s literature as “art product” to encompass sociocultural dimensions that give rise to their affective sense of fulfillment and pleasure (Shusterman, 2013).

Absent in-school pressures and accountability of high-stakes English Language Arts standards, this dissertation, a meta/ethnographically informed case study known as The Picturebook Project aimed to take a step towards an ongoing curation of “glowing data” (MacLure, 2010) reflective of child reader’s lively and multifaceted aesthetic responses to these particular picturebooks in order to: (1) further explore Sipe’s (2008) grounded theoretical findings on aesthetic impulse that celebrate the freedom of a picturebook’s interpretive possibilities; and (2) propose the construction of meaning potentials of environment (setting, culture, and tools) and elementary-aged readers as
mutually co-constitutive in joyful reading transactions. Interested child participants, ages 7-9, adult directors and staff members, and visitors to a public exhibit of these responses were recruited from a daytime Summer Care Program at an urban community center located in a historically African-American neighborhood with a high immigrant population within a Mid-Atlantic city's greater metropolitan area. Under adult facilitation and peer collaboration, the child participants’ ensuing aesthetic experiences generated new meaning-making possibilities that often diverged from their familiar in-school prescriptive reading instruction geared for English Language Learners (ELLs). While jointly transacting with the environment at hand they enjoyed creative contemplation of picturebooks’ affordances as perceivable action possibilities and defying the mimetic construction of boundaries separating fictional and social worlds.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... ix

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................ x

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. xi

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION............................................................................................. 1

- Far Reaches of Standards-Based Reading Instruction ....................................................... 4
  - Preparing Future Literacy Educators .............................................................................. 4
  - Teaching Elementary Literacy ...................................................................................... 6
  - Writing “Basalised” Fiction and Nonfiction Literature for Children ........................... 10
- A Closer Look at Common Core State Standards ............................................................. 12
- Overlooking Picturebooks ............................................................................................ 15
  - Complex Multimodal Demands ................................................................................... 15
  - Total Design .............................................................................................................. 17
- Trends .......................................................................................................................... 19
- Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................ 22
- Research Question ........................................................................................................ 25
- Significance of Study ..................................................................................................... 25

CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ....................................................................... 27

- Defining Picturebooks .................................................................................................... 27
  - Interplay of Words and Pictures .................................................................................. 28
  - Metapicturebooks ........................................................................................................ 30
  - Peritextual Elements ................................................................................................... 35
  - Affordance Theory ..................................................................................................... 37
- Defining Reader Response as a Transactional Paradigm .................................................. 40
  - Lived Experiences ....................................................................................................... 41
  - Transactional Stances .................................................................................................. 43
  - Interpretive Communities ........................................................................................... 44
  - Reframing Transaction as Intra-Action ....................................................................... 47
- Sociocultural Dimensions of Literacy Play ................................................................. 53
  - Creativity and Imagination ......................................................................................... 54
  - Play Pedagogy ............................................................................................................ 55

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ..................................................................... 62

- Taxonomies of Child Readers’ Verbal Responses to Picturebooks ................................. 64
- Child Readers’ Responses to Preselected Picturebooks ................................................. 70
- Nonlinguistic Ways Child Readers Respond to Picturebooks ......................................... 74
  - Dramatic Responses ................................................................................................... 75
  - Drawn Responses ....................................................................................................... 76
Tactile Responses................................................................. 78

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ........................................... 80
Rationale for Bricolage Approach ................................................ 81
Researcher-as-Bricoleur.......................................................... 83
Borrowing from Qualitative Case Studies ................................... 86
Borrowing from Ethnographic Studies ........................................ 87
Methodological Tensions ......................................................... 89
Researcher Reflexivity ............................................................. 94
Responsive Classroom Approach .............................................. 96
Participant-Directed Adaptations .............................................. 98
Community Center-Directed Adaptations .................................... 99
Research Design of The Picturebook Project ................................. 101
Timeline .................................................................................. 101
Community Center as Research Site .......................................... 102
Recruitment of Participants ...................................................... 105
Elementary-aged Children Enrolled in Summer Care Program ......... 105
Directors of Community Center and Staff Members ...................... 110
Community Center Visitors ...................................................... 110
Selection of Metapicturebooks & Other Materials as Cultural Tools .. 112
Visits to Community Center ..................................................... 117
Sessions of The Picturebook Project .......................................... 119
Guiding Intentions ................................................................. 120
Day-to-Day Phases of Activity .................................................. 127
Data Collection Methods ......................................................... 131
Further Considerations ........................................................... 135
Minimizing Risks .................................................................... 135
Member-Checking ................................................................. 136
Realizing Data Saturation ......................................................... 139

CHAPTER 5 DESCRIPTION OF SETTING AS SOCIAL CONTEXT ............ 141
A Community Center in a Historically African-American Neighborhood .. 142
Mrs. Clark .............................................................................. 142
Urbanization ........................................................................... 146
Desegregation ......................................................................... 148
Influx of Immigrants ................................................................ 150
Mr. Richard ............................................................................ 151
Role of the Community Center and Its Staff ................................. 153
Summer Care Program Is Fun .................................................. 158
Organized Chaos of Arts & Craft Room ....................................... 164

CHAPTER 6 DATA ANALYSIS .......................................................... 172
Borrowing from Microethnography ............................................. 174
Borrowing from Post-Qualitative Research .................................. 180
“Hot Spots” as Affective Cues for “Glowing Data” Analysis ............. 181
Multimodal Presentation of “Glowing Data” ............................................................. 184

CHAPTER 7 CURATION OF CHILD READER RESPONSES ........................................... 188

“It’s fun when you like do things.”—Tamah .............................................................. 191
Exploring Possibilities Through Cooperation and Sharing ........................................ 196
Experimentation with “Loose Parts” and Problem-solving ..................................... 199
“That idea’s [sic] too hard.”—Hakim .............................................................................. 204
Creative Autonomy of Open-ended Responses to Metapicturebooks ....................... 212
Child Participants’ Re-creations of Metapicturebooks .............................................. 217
Sociodramatic Interactions and Playful Subversions ................................................. 221

CHAPTER 8 STUDY IMPLICATIONS .............................................................................. 226

Evoking Wonder Through Metapicturebooks ............................................................. 228
   Every Context Unique Unto Itself ............................................................................... 230
   Finding Pleasure ........................................................................................................ 230
   Overcoming Discomfort ............................................................................................ 231
Adjustments to the Official Regime on In-School Reading Instruction ..................... 232
   Rethinking Deficit Models ....................................................................................... 233
   Valuing Imaginative Play, Creativity, and Subversion ............................................ 234
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 235

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PICTUREBOOKS .............................................. 237

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 247

APPENDIX A CONSENT FOR RESEARCH FORMS ...................................................... 266

Child Participants ........................................................................................................ 266
Community Center Directors and Staff ................................................................. 272
Visitors to Exhibit ....................................................................................................... 276

APPENDIX B RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS ..................................................................... 281

Child Participants ........................................................................................................ 281
Community Center Directors and Staff ................................................................. 282
Visitors to Exhibit ....................................................................................................... 283

APPENDIX C ELIGIBILITY SCREENING QUESTIONS ............................................. 284

APPENDIX D RECRUITMENT FLYERS ..................................................................... 285

APPENDIX E COMMENT CARD FOR VISITORS TO EXHIBIT ............................... 287

APPENDIX F INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS .................................................................... 288

APPENDIX G TELL ME FRAMEWORK QUESTIONING PROTOCOL ........................ 290
APPENDIX H  TENTATIVE 90-MINUTE SESSION PLANS........................................ 293
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Sample page from leveled book (Dufresne, 2008)............................7
Figure 4-1: Multidimensional & interconnected contexts.................................92
Figure 4-2: Psuedonyms of Child Participants, Selfies & Photos of Each Other......109
Figure 4-3: Morning messages for Sessions 1-9.............................................121
Figure 4-4: Emoji anchor chart co-constructed with child participants..............125
Figure 4-5: Anchor chart of children’s brainstorm about creating book monsters....126
Figure 5-1: Posting of “Community Center Rules” adjact to sign-in desk............145
Figure 5-2: General interior and exterior layout of Community Center..............148
Figure 5-3: Sketch of Arts & Craft Room with child participant’s photographs.....166
Figure 5-4: Photographs of quarter-round supply table prior to start of session.....169
Figure 5-5: Two video still frames of Nuru “showing off” to camera.................170
Figure 7-1: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on “fun” while reading..........190
Figure 7-2: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on cooperation.....................195
Figure 7-3: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on experimentation...............198
Figure 7-4: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on frustration......................203
Figure 7-5: Anchor chart of child participants’ reflections about affordances......209
Figure 7-6: Anchor chart on what a book is and what it can be, but not yet is......210
Figure 7-7: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on creative autonomy..........211
Figure 7-8: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on re-made metapicturebooks..216
Figure 7-9: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on play and subversion..........220
Figure 7-10: Anchor chart of Story Starters from ninth session.........................223
Figure 7-11: Tell Me anchor chart from ninth session.......................................223
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1:  *Metapicturebooks selected for The Picturebook Project*........................................ 115
Table 4-2:  Itemization of daily sessions .................................................................................... 129
Table 7-1:  Report of reading goals for teacher evaluation based on DRA.................................192
But Eeyore was saying to himself, “This writing business. Pencils and what-not. Over-rated, if you ask me. Silly stuff. Nothing in it.”

--A. A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

Firstly, I would like to express my immense gratitude to Dr. Vivian Yenika-Agbaw for your steadfast support of my doctoral studies. You are a pillar of excellence as a researcher, mentor, instructor, writer, editor, and most especially, role model. From your dedication to the field of children’s literature, to your students near and far, to the teaching profession, and to the lived experiences of child readers, you have bequeathed to me an invaluable education. Because of you, I have developed my voice as a scholar. For that I am ever grateful.

To all the members of my committee, I appreciate the time each of you have invested in knowing my research and my passion for picturebooks. From office chats and meetings over coffee or Skype to your engaging classes, our conversations have been a continual source of inspiration and encouragement. I thank you.

To Dr. Dan Hade, you are my Dumbledore. If every fantastical journey begins with the opening of a book, may your encouraging words and entrusted library always be my guide.

To Dr. Pat Shannon, not only am I indebted to your insights and wisdom about literacy, but also to your wit, for you somehow knew whenever I needed a laugh.
To Dr. Tina Thompson, you have an incredible way of imparting your passion for the visual culture of childhood. Thank you for sharing a piece of your Art Education world with me. For that I am a better scholar and educator of young children.

To Paul, Colette, Rene, and Yamil, thank you for transforming our shared office space into a such a supportive environment wherein we can “riff” about all things related to children’s literature and pop culture. I have learned so much from each of you.

To my doctoral cohort, a.k.a. The Ridiculous Backchannel, you are incomparable.

To Katie, Amy², and May, you are my “academic” sisters. I am grateful for each of your friendships, for you’ve kept me grounded, healthy and fit, and entertained. My happiest of memories as a graduate student will be with you.

To Margot, Hilary, Sarah, Chelsea, and Nicki, though countless miles keep us apart, your friendships have been a wellspring of strength, understanding, and kindness. You listened when I decided to leave my first-grade classroom to pursue this calling. You graciously opened your heart and homes to my visits since moving away. And you always carved out time to chat. You are missed and loved.

To Eric, thank you for becoming my person.

To my parents, Mom and Dad, my gratitude is longer than this dissertation. In times of doubt, your unconditional love, unwavering optimism and reassurances have been a beacon of light and hope.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, [on] what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest.

(Foucault, 1988, p. 154)

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; PL 107-110). Aside from its reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), this federal encroachment on public schools availed $900 million to those States committed to a restrictive “one size-fits-all” method of reading instruction based on evidence-based findings from the National Reading Panel (NRP) report embodied in NCLB’s Reading First Initiative (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). In its literature review NRP relied heavily on experimental research design while ignoring the findings of ethnographic and qualitative research. In a follow-up article to his edited Big Brother and The National Reading Curriculum: How Ideology Trumped Evidence Allington conveys his fears about “the potentially harmful influence these misrepresentations seem to be having on classroom practices, often under the guise of ‘scientific’ or ‘evidence-based’ criteria” (2002; 2005, p. 464). The sequential chapters presented in the NRP report that serve as the cornerstone of federal literacy policy condense reading instruction into five essential pillars—phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Calfee, a renown literacy
expert, remarks that with NCLB “the federal government instituted programs of standardized testing and school-level accountability that now significantly influence ‘what counts’—what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed” (2014, p. 19-20). Its aftermath defined “what counts” for my former elementary students’ reading and those classroom materials, practices, and measurable outcomes of my “highly explicit” reading instruction devoted to those five pillars (p. 22, 26).

Politicians and corporations alike hail the adoption of these large-scale education reform initiatives backed by billion-dollar incentives as necessary mandates to hold schools accountable to their reported annual yearly progress towards students’ reaching of demonstrable benchmarks in reading. But critics like Manzo (2007) described Reading First as “the most prescriptive federal grant program in education” (RF; p.1). Just as Allington cautioned, distortions of that NRP report became more than a philosophical quarrel among reading experts; it became a daily reality from teachers across the country. Much of my professional development as a newly-minted first-grade teacher focused on those “five pillars” as the building-blocks of effective reading instruction. RF, conditional for receipt of federal funding under NCLB, directed my training on how to use instructional materials incorporating those five pillars since my school district served at-risk students (Calfee, 2014, p. 26). By 2007 fidelity review teams comprised of reading coaches, school administrators, and district instructional specialists routinely walked through my classroom to monitor my verbatim adherence to scripted teacher manuals promoting those five pillars of explicit reading instruction. This intrusive monitoring set in motion my reservations about what I perceived as a codified disregard for my experiences, voice and agency, for my differing “ideological and epistemological” beliefs
about literacy development, and for the commercialization of reading instruction as
serving the best interests of each individual child reader in my classroom (Calfee, 2014,
p. 31).

A decade after NCLB legislation was implemented, Council of Chief State School
Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices define the
knowledge and skills in which publicly educated students from kindergarten to twelfth
grade should be proficient to become college and career ready upon high school
graduation. This became the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); a supposed “state-
led effort” underwritten by the Gates Foundation aimed to establish “consistent learning
goals across the states” in mathematics and English language arts (ELA; CCSS Initiative,
2014; Ravitch, 2014). Though not required to adopt the CCSS, those states choosing to
adopt them were in a more competitive position to receive generous grant monies from
President Barack Obama’s Race to the Top Initiative. To implicate the shortcomings of
these federal literacy policies relevant to this study, the next few sections retrace my
experiences as an educator and freelance children’s writer, for in those capacities I
continue to have misgivings about curricular standards that favor particular materials and
pedagogies in school reading instruction and disproportionately promote one way to
transact with picturebooks that discounts child readers’ subjectivities. Interspersed among
my anecdotes I cite various research articles, findings, and opinions from foremost
reading scholars who also criticize the assumptions of these far-reaching codifications of
reading instruction.
Far Reaches of Standards-Based Reading Instruction

For most public-school students, ignorance about the assortment of acronyms steering their educational journeys may be bliss. Like a vehicle door’s side mirror, the consequences of these policies are much closer than they appear. A generation of learners currently matriculated in colleges and universities across the country are the products of this standardized-testing era. Thanks to “one size fits all” evidence-based reading instruction, their default reading stances often replicate those learned skills that had been expected of them to demonstrate proficiency or mastery of grade-level ELA standards. Deviations tend to bring discomfort. For those still ascending the public education system, the very literacy practices and reading materials that they encounter each school day continue to be curated as the means to those restrictive ends.

Preparing Future Literacy Educators

To pre-service elementary teachers emerging from an era of standardized English Language Arts curriculum in grades K-12, I have observed how some picturebooks’ multiplicity of meanings and interpretive ambiguities (Pantaleo & Sipe, 2008), such as Macaulay’s (1990) four simultaneous narratives in Black and White or multiple seasonal perspectives in Browne’s (1998) Voices in the Park, are disquieting. Indeterminacies distress them. Scholars have suggested that these pivotal narratives herald reader interpretations devoid of “ready-made answers to the children’s queries” (McGuire, Belfatti, & Ghiso, p.198). To “tolerate” these uncertainties (Meek, 1988), readers must go beyond attending to language, text structure, and various literary elements such as plot,
character, and setting, for there fails to be any one right or “correct” interpretation to infer.

In my experience, pre-service teachers also brim with frustration as linguistic conventions and fairy tale tropes become upended in Scieszka’s (1992) *Stinky Cheese Man and other Fairly Stupid Tales (Stinky Cheese Man)*. Despite fond memories of this particular picturebook from childhood, the prospect of sharing aloud this title in future elementary classroom settings seems daunting to them. In lieu of an evocation of aesthetic responses that foreground a reader’s affect, years of prior educational experiences requiring extraction of evidence from self-contained, objective texts have discouraged elicitations of joy in reading. Their propensity for a close reading stance, a New Criticism paradigm of text interpretation, remains the favored mode “of reading necessary to perform well on standardised tests of reading” (Sulzer, 2014, p. 143).

Understanding unconventional picturebooks like *Stinky Cheese Man* necessitates an aesthetic stance that goes beyond “the four corners of the text” so as to trust a reader’s own lived-through experience. Readers shape and are shaped by picturebooks. Picturebooks shape and are shaped by readers. In a transactional paradigm, they become mutually co-constitutive in the construction of meaning.

Although such innovative titles that rethink the relationship between reader and picturebook continue to be published, their meaning potential remains undervalued in standardized language arts curriculums. In guiding publishers and curriculum developers, Coleman and Pimentel (2012), architects of the CCSS, highlight commercial materials’ prescribed role in staging context-neutral “opportunities for students to build knowledge through close reading of specific texts (including read-alouds)” (p. 8). Narrow
interpretations of this statement as directive neglect reader response criticism and champion more print-centric textual interpretations. Contrarily, these picturebooks fail to monopolize meaning. The abovementioned readers singularly versed in a close reading stance become thwarted when indeterminacies reposition the onus of their meaning making away from the text.

Teaching Elementary Literacy

After a decade in the first-grade classroom and a stint as a freelance children’s writer for a national textbook company’s online K-5 literacy program, I loathe the banality of commercial leveled books, e.g. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s Rigby PM Books or Pioneer Valley Book's Bella and Rosie Collection, that offer controlled vocabulary, patterned language, prearranged spacing, font size, lines of print, and ornamental pictures. My former colleagues, six first-grade teachers, and I often expressed this sentiment to my former elementary school’s reading coaches and administrators in hopes that less developmentally formulaic children’s literature might be ordered. After all, my mostly pet-less and culturally diverse child readers could endure only so many of Bella and Rosie’s, two Bichon Frises, adventures, vacations, dress-ups, and mealtimes before protesting their limited book choices.

As prescribed tools for instructional and independent reading practice, these books patronize young readers. The layout, wording, and visual content promotes particular reading strategies that support decoding and comprehension. For instance, each two-page spread of a free online downloaded book from Pioneer Valley Books, the
leveled reader, *Christmas is Coming for Bella and Rosie*, features anthropomorphized dialogue (Dufresne, 2008). See figure 1-1 for screen shot of page 3 from that downloadable leveled book.

Figure 1-1: Sample page from leveled book (Dufresne, 2008).

“Yippee!” said Rosie.
“I love Christmas.
I love bones.
I love toys.
I’m going to get some new bones and some new toys for Christmas.”

To the right of the text block there is a photograph of the two dogs posing on a red upholstered high-back chair next to an unadorned tree. Layered atop the photograph is a thinking bubble that extends away from Rosie’s furry head. Inside of that bubble are two images, a bone and dog toy. This leveled text anticipates certain implied readers in need of picture cues to decode unknown words, namely bones and toys. The page has been contrived to reinforce this reading strategy.
With the most convincing enthusiasm I could muster, conversations ensued about my preselected titles—chosen from the school’s leveled library with instructional accuracy range in mind—as students narrowed down their choices based on prospective interests. Anecdotal notes from informal assessments and running record analyses in hand and a structured routine, adapted from Jan Richardson’s (2009), Fountas and Pinnell’s (1996) and National Literacy Coalition's guided reading models, would target those skills and strategies necessary to advance each student’s literacy development. Alongside my individualized and group instruction during Reading Workshop, these copious leveled books comprised the primary material resources expected by school administrators to help my students achieve measurable ends—state and county grade-level mandates prescribing one-size-fits-all reading outcomes. Hiebert and Van Sluys (2014) forewarn of the potential consequences of an exclusive focus on giving students access to texts’ identified level of complexity as outlined by CCSS. They caution,

Furthering the distance between where learners are and where they are expected to be will likely further marginalize or deny access to the literacy club for students whose experiences, interests, and cultures are not part of a leveled canon. (p. 297)

Commercially published leveled readers like Pioneer Valley’s *Christmas is Coming for Bella and Rosie* are unlikely to universally appeal to early readers, especially to those from differing cultural backgrounds. Incremental increase of the complexity of leveled texts based on a view that attainment of proficiency in reading is simply a matter of acquiring a disembodied set of skills, could yield a generation of uncritical young readers unprepared to engage in all manner of texts that they are likely to encounter in their future literate lives (Hiebert & Van Sluys, 2014). By staying outside of the story to
extricate its details, readers could miss the opportunity to immerse themselves in the story world and to experience the story. In other words, there may be inattentiveness to reading from an aesthetic stance for it gets pushed to the periphery (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 56).

Adhering to a “simple view” of reading (R) as language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), a multiplicative relationship between accurately decoding (D) strings of letters fluently into words from which to signify comprehensible meaning (C), or R = D x C, these leveled books relegate literacy to universal skill acquisition (Street & Street, 1995). Predicated on early literacy skills, such as concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, deficiency in either variable precludes independent reading. Imposing such a pedagogical understanding of literacy as a “reified set of ‘neutral’ competencies” quells readers’ subjectivities (Street & Street, 1995, p. 76). Such an autonomous model disregards the plurality of students’ cultural backgrounds and active roles in meaning making, decontextualizes texts, and privileges the status of written language in public communication. Much like Street and Street’s (1995) description about the objectification of language in “book reports,” a retelling of a leveled book’s fictional narrative becomes reduced to anchor charts prompting recall of emblematic narrative structures and use of sequential transition words. Advocates of this approach reason, “the final object is to achieve mastery and authority over the text, whose meanings are not negotiable” (Street & Street, 1995, p. 77). Student innovation, creativity, and risk-taking languish in an atmosphere of prescriptive procedures and learned replication of narrative conventions; even so, publishers of such leveled texts thrive in this CCSS era.
Writing “Basalised” Fiction and Nonfiction Literature for Children

Goodman (1988) coined the term “basalisation” to characterize what happens to texts, such as the overhaul of a paragraph from Judy Blume’s (1981) novel *The One in the Middle is the Green Kangaroo* to remove any hint of sex bias, when editors conform to strict publishing criteria in the production of basal readers. Censorship and inauthenticity result. Upon review of a 9th grade CCSS-aligned textbook Sulzer (2014) contemporizes Goodman’s argument. Adoption of CCSS and its aligned classroom materials highlights a growing divide between young readers and reading. Promoting a view of textual interpretation that elevates the textbook as object above that of an individual reader’s subjective interpretation situated within his or her unique sociocultural context reduces, homogenizes, and simplifies each reader as belonging to “a uniform set of readers with normalized interpretations of texts” (Sulzer, 2014, p. 141). Even though evidence-based CCSS-aligned products and teaching practices have been branded as innovative, in reality, they ignore the creative potential of readers in their meaning-making. As part of the “mystification” of CCSS, defined by Newkirk (2013) as “taking a practice that was once viewed as within the normal competence of a teacher and making it seem so technical and advanced that a new commercial product (or form of consultation) is necessary” (p. 5), Sulzer (2014) remarks how this “devalues teachers as professionals” by relegating them to hours of “condescending” professional development to learn how to hawk costly CCSS-aligned products with fidelity (p. 149). From personal experience, I’d add that this “mystification” also has the potential to degrade writers of such children’s literature in conforming to CCSS expectations of text complexity.
While penning dozens of literary and informational texts for a national educational corporation at the inception of CCSS adoption, I carefully adhered to their proprietary guidelines developed from Coleman and Pimentel’s revised publisher’s criteria. Every draft inspired by my personal life experiences and meticulous primary source research had to be watered down to meet qualitative and quantitative measures of text complexity. Just as CCSS’ Supplemental Information for Appendix A suggests, these texts had to be partial to chronological sequences of events, no deviations from linear timelines, and to literal, unambiguous, and conversational language, not figures of speech or content-specific vocabulary, and to singular, easily evidenced meanings, not ambiguous inferences or satire (Common, n.d.g). Given a universal implied reader, my writing minimized expectations about "knowledge demands," defined by CCSS's Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards as “the extent of reader’s life experiences and depth of cultural and literary and content or discipline knowledge” (Common, n.d.b, p. 5).

Even if an occasional stylistic word or phrasing escaped my notice, quantitative readability measures usually flagged the text at too high of an overall Lexile® for the publisher’s requested instructional accuracy range; my subsequent revisions would result in that word’s omission. With the addition of a singular decorative illustration and audio support to each digitized story or informational text, post-production marketing highlights each text’s utility as the means for honing mastery of discrete skills related to grade-specific reading standards adaptive to individual readers’ literacy development needs. For example, under Reading Literature’s “Key Ideas and Details” of CCSS for
English Language Arts, third graders are expected to “ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers” (Common, n.d.e). To assist a student in the identification of the literary setting, exact words from the text will be automatically highlighted if the wrong textual evidence is chosen. Consequently, reading becomes an exercise in extracting written evidentiary support to demonstrate understanding.

A Closer Look at Common Core State Standards

Though frustrated by my lack of creative licensure as an author, I had greater pity for future elementary students subjected to these leveled texts. Attributing “selective attention to education research and the drive for accountability,” Botzakis, Burns, and Hall (2014) trace the presence of the autonomous model from the Reading Wars to its influence on educational reforms that lead up to its current codification. Within an explanation of key shifts about increasing text complexity, CCSS (Common, n.d.c) represents itself as a “destination” of college and career readiness, a telos. With ELA anchor standards iterated by backwards planning the accumulation of discrete, predefined skills and abilities from 12th grade down to Kindergarten, CCSS are an instrument of politicized educational policies intended to equalize the performance disparity between public school systems serving affluent and poor, but, in actuality, preserve a neoliberal status quo (Shannon, 2013). A neoliberal discourse defines education, according to Brass (2014), “in terms of human capital development and positioning education as central to individual social mobility, to job creation, and to U.S. corporations’ abilities to compete
in the global economy” (p. 119). A norming of educational standards intends to prepare a productive workforce capable of competing in a global marketplace, but inequities remain. Individuals and public institutions of learning that deviate from this normative trajectory incur disciplinary punishments, financial sanctions, public ostracization, and exclusion from the hegemonic citizenry and workplace through marginalization (Larson, 2013).

Adoption of CCSS increases market demand for related teaching materials and services, e.g., my freelance writing job, to produce them, and yields the potential for profitability. Speaking at the National Council for State Legislatures, Bill Gates (2009) describes the economically gainful consequences of an open market system when commercial curriculum and assessments align with CCSS. He states,

> When the tests are aligned with the Common Core Standards, the curriculum will line up as well, and it will unleash a powerful market of people providing services for better teaching. For the first time there will be a large uniform base of customers looking at using products that can help every kid learn and every teacher get better. (n.p.)

By conceptualizing ELA standards as a business model, this statement reiterates the subjugation of students and teachers to the utility value of these banal commercial texts. Somewhat mitigating this gloom and doom is the underlying belief classroom teachers still hold the reigns in deciding which picturebooks to make available to their students. In CCSS’s *Key Design Considerations* for English Language Arts standards, a stated “focus on results rather than means” imparts a self-determination of viable pathways for reaching these goals (Common, n.d.c). CCSS elaborates, “Teachers are thus
free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards."

Though CCSS remains the driving force behind material creation and selection by way of text complexity, such a statement shifts decision-making about pedagogical content, especially choice of literacy materials, onto teachers. In other words, teachers control what materials to make available in their classrooms for instruction and student's self-selection. But availability of resources at any given public school mitigates those choices.

But alas, a not-so-minor caveat attempts to topple professional judgement about curricular materials. As per CCSS, the staircase of increasing text complexity ought to influence decisions about literacy materials purchased for and availed to children, including picturebooks. Framing teacher incompetency as a cause for failing schools (Shannon, Whitney, & Wilson, 2014) and extolling the virtues of an autonomous conception of literacy in the provision of reading materials, CCSS tacitly promotes those insipid, yet popular leveled texts. The utility of printed words needn't be the sole driving force behind the choice of picturebooks to promote a child’s literacy acquisition. Illustrations and their interplay with words also matter to child readers. Any omission of these visual contributions fails to fully appreciate subjective meaning possibilities.
Overlooking Picturebooks

Complex Multimodal Demands

Reading picturebooks requires a complex navigation of verbal and visual representations to co-construct meaning. However, in this Common Core Era, as Felten (2008) remarks, “Our pedagogy and academic training often focus on words and texts as the source of knowledge” (p. 62). Neglect of visual and other nonlinguistic representations suppresses meaning potentials and discounts the semiotic realities of students’ lives. Averignou (2009) proclaims, “Whether we acknowledge it or not, we live in an era of visual culture, the so-called “bain d’images” (image bath), which influences enormously our perception of self and the surrounding world, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and general life-style” (p. 28).

In Literacy in the New Media Age Kress (2003) advances a multimodal framework of literacy to argue that multiple modes of representation should replace printed language as the central tenet of any understanding of literacy. Valued modes of public communication within a “semiotic landscape” are recognized and imbued with meaning in a particular sociocultural context (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15). Images compete with and complement linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial languages to convey meaning.

Addressing the promotion of visual literacy, Galda and Short (1993) favor the reading of picturebooks, in particular those that channel imagination or various bookmaking formats, as a way to “explore, reflect and critique” images (p. 516). CCSS
indirectly allude to multiliteracies. One anchor standard hints at a broader definition of literacy upon stating, “integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words” (Common, n.d.a). Mention of illustrations in the CCSS has been reduced to three instances that privilege a print-centric pathway for students to glean narrative understanding. Furthermore, by emphasizing multimodal signs from which to construct meaning, CCSS fails to regard the materiality of picturebooks in literacy learning and play.

A review of CCSS’s grade-by-grade itemization for this “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas” renders a myopic perspective of multiliteracies. In English Language Arts, specifically reading of literature for Grade 1, illustrations are mentioned in conjunction with “details in a story” as a means to “describe its characters, settings, and events” (Common, n.d.d). For the same standard in Grade 2, CCSS state, “Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot” (Common, n.d.g). Such a wording of standards not only promotes conformity of narrative meaning, but values illustrated stories in which the “pictures are subordinate to the words” or complementary picturebooks that “leave very little, if anything, to the imagination” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 14). Pictures take a back seat to print-centric texts, e.g., short passages. Such a picturebook features printed words that draw attention to some pictorial details that support the gist of the narrative.

When words and pictures are limited to a symmetrical or complementary relationship other taxonomical qualities that potentially contribute to meaning making are ignored. Moreover, when printed words carrying the narrative load, so to speak,
illustrations are consigned to low-level thinking. Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) explain, “if words and images fill each other’s gaps wholly, there is nothing left for the reader’s imagination, and the reader remains somewhat passive” (p. 17). In Grade 3 CCSS students are expected to be able to “explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)” (Common, n.d.e). Though acknowledging an illustration’s potential elaboration of the narrative through amplification of mood by tonal color choice or detailed specification of setting, this standard overlooks the visual possibility of alternative or contradictory information that requires more from the reader. These prima facie readings of specific CCSS inherently preclude the possibility of expanding literacy to other representational modes and fail to fully embrace the potential of picturebooks in children’s literate lives.

**Total Design**

Nominal critical attention has been given to the picturebook as an object in a child’s hands. Picturebooks present multimodal content, usually words and pictures, through a material format, that is, a cover enclosing a minimum number of pages of various, size, shape, or texture. Any idea presented in a picturebook through the employment of multimodal signifiers becomes the content to which cultural meaning is ascribed. But another “culture” attaches to the idea of a picturebook in and of itself, to its physical format (Westin, 2013). Although outside the scope of this study, it is worthwhile
to note that contemporary picturebooks’ material format emerges from a legacy of book design history and conventionalized book-handlings.

Physical structures of hardcover picturebooks—dust jacket, cover, pages, and binding—seldom vary. Though content and reader may differ across settings, this format dominates bookshelves nationwide. Its perpetuation reinforces predictability and replicability of implied child readers’ handling of picturebooks as well as discourages any potential deviation. Picturebook affordances when reduced to a fixed set of actions in relation to that format constrain a child reader’s experience. Clay’s (2000) widely-circulated observation survey to glean a young reader’s concepts about print pays little attention to the design of the picturebook as an object in a reader’s hands. Moreover, it advances a print-centric perspective of meaning. A child’s identification of the front of a book when handed to the child in a spine first, vertical position tests his or her conventional understanding of book orientation. In pointing where to being to read conveys an understanding that “print, not pictures, carries the message” (Clay, 2000, p. 12). Other test questions emphasize a child’s knowledge about the right-to-left, top-to-bottom directionality of text, including return sweep as well as one-to-one correspondence of spoken to printed word and identification of sight words, punctuation, capital and lowercase letters (p. 12-13). Of course, cultural preferences and habit dictates specific book handling actions over others. After all, most teachers would surely frown upon tossing a book across a classroom like a Frisbee. Innovative picturebooks that rethink book design construction in terms of expanding potential reader’s tactile mediation question the dominant culture associated with book handling conventions.
Trends

Since the arrival of Macaulay’s *Black and White*, Browne’s *Voices in the Park*, and Scieszka’s *Stinky Cheese Man*, picturebooks continue to flood the children’s literature market under the guise of postmodernism. Dual trends in children’s literature publishing throughout the twenty-first century have generated numerous titles that facilitate active reader participation in imaginative play that manifests as physical movement and expressions of delight. Before the bus driver in Willems’ (2003) Caldecott Honor picturebook “breaks the fourth wall” to task young readers with denying Pigeon’s pleas to drive the bus, an anxious Grover directly appealed to a preschool crowd of readers to cease turning the book’s pages in Stone’s (1971) *There’s a Monster at the End of This Book*. This first trend of boundary breaking permits characters to stray from the narrative frame to which they belong (Lewis, 2001). This occurrence not only helps young readers to realize the culturally constructed conventions of fictional story worlds, but also avails opportunities for playful subversion in their aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1978; Sipe, 2008b).

Recapping the decade-long glut in which “the reader was invited to participate in the story,” children’s librarian Elizabeth Bird (2016) anticipates the “THE SLOW DEATH OF META” as picturebooks that break the fourth wall linger on in publishers’ frontlists (p. 24). Bird (2016) reflects on picturebooks published in 2015, if any meta books have continued, it is those written along the lines of *Press Here* (Chronicle, 2011) by Hervé Tullet. Akin to a picture book app, Tullet’s title drew attention to the joys of physical contact with a book.
Other titles that encourage readers to get physical with their contents continued to come out…. (p. 24)

As noted by Bird, Tullet’s (2012) *Press Here* invites play. Engagement becomes a dialogical insofar as a picturebook portends certain playful actions by a child reader that generate a feeling of meaningful contribution to and influence over co-construction of meaning (Schwebs, 2014; Rosenblatt, 1985). In *Press Here* print instructions for a young reader to press, rub, blow, shake, and tap the many static dots yields a synergistic, yet organic transaction. This second trend highlights the joyous and seemingly magical possibilities of playful book handling and reading activity that surpass the drama of a page turn. The popularity, acclaim, and commercial success of Willems’ debut title and Tullet’s *Press Here* have spawned imitations that prominently feature a confluence of boundary breaking narratives and playful mediation to be experienced while engaged in reading transactions with them.

For these picturebooks their materiality anticipates playfulness. While exploring playful interactivity of postmodern aesthetics in picturebooks, Nikolajeva (2008) remarks, “the boundary between art and artifact becomes vague” (p. 67). In *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* Bella’s dog gets swallowed up by the book’s gutter—the actual interior seam where the verso and recto meet—as do all subsequent rescue volunteers. Through Bella’s direct appeal to the reader by way of a letter that emerges from the gutter, readers receive instructions on how to physically manipulate the book to shake and wiggle the consumed characters to freedom. This picturebook becomes an artifact of play, a toy that compels hands-on manipulation and frame-breaking. Self-referentiality sets apart *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* from other lift-the-flap or cut-out picturebook titles, e.g. Hill’s
(2000) Where’s Spot, Idle’s (2013) Flora and the Flamingo, or Carle’s (1987) The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Kunhardt’s (1940) perennial favorite Pat the Bunny relies on various textured materials embedded into the pages to provide the young reader, often a baby or toddler, a sensory “touch and feel” experience. Carle’s innovative die-cut holes and rainbow-colored sequential pages of increasing size reinforces the story about a caterpillar’s consumption of various foods before enveloping itself in a chrysalis and transforming into a butterfly. Celebrated for generations, not only did these two examples re-think the relationship between picturebook design and a child reader’s prospective actions but have surely inspired other authors and illustrators to follow in their pioneering footsteps.

Unlike leveled readers, for the purposes of this study, the term, metapicturebook, intentionally underscores the communion of self-referentiality and innovative affordances. Selected metapicturebooks are based on the two-fold criteria of boundary-breaking fictional narratives and various design affordances.¹ They proffer more than utility in achieving college and career readiness. Self-conscious of its own material construction and playful mediation through readership, a metapicturebook gives prominence to its status as a picturebook becoming subject of the narrative and object in the hands of a reader in anticipation of dialogical meaning making. Young readers’ active and open-ended participation in the critical exploration of these metapicturebooks affords aesthetic reading experiences that elicit in them a joyous sense of wonder and delight.

¹ Chapter four details the criteria for selecting metapicturebooks for this study. See also Table 4-1 and Annotated Bibliography of Picturebooks for a list of those selected books and a brief summary about each one, respectively.
Such responses potentially contrast that of more lackluster prescriptive, level texts featuring over-simplified narratives, high frequency and easily decodable words, e.g., *Christmas is Coming for Bella and Rosie*.

**Statement of the Problem**

By privileging certain leveled texts that adhere to a model of increasing complexity and/or encourage certain comprehension strategies, CCSS emphasizes literacy as a set of perceptual and cognitive skills. Promoting close readings that value the objectivity of a text to the neglect of a child’s aesthetic reading experience as is currently codified by CCSS is highly problematic. Such one-sidedness curbs children’s agentive meaning-making possibilities in reading and responding to picturebooks, discounts their subjectivities, and overstates print as the leading symbology of contemporary multimodal communication.

Epistemologically, knowledge fails to be configured from an objective representation of reality. The relationship between knowledge and reality instead emerges from the product of individual and collective experiences. Sociocultural context and authenticity of learning experiences surely matter in a child’s reading experiences. Reiterating the CCSS’s marginalization of child readers’ subjectivities, Coleman (2011, April 28) proclaims in a speech to New York state school officials, “People don’t really give a shit about what you feel or what you think.” Even if a student has literate knowledge that extends beyond the scope of CCSS, Coleman regards meaning as fixed, ready-made, and conforms to the test at hand, that is, outside the child reader’s lived
experience. Under such a mandate, aesthetic experiences and any materials that evoke them become reduced to ephemeral pleasure. Nonetheless, I believe, a glimmer of pedagogical hope remains, for research in New Literacy Studies avails a future of literacy no longer consigned to just decoding letters on a page and demonstrating certain metacognitive reading comprehension strategies.

Literacy is social act. Meaning and language are constructed and framed by the identity of the individual and the socially situated context in which they are purposefully employed. This ideological model recognizes the social and varied nature of literacy practices, including the autonomous model of literacy, as well as the inscription of power relations upon such practices. While rejecting the notion of essential literacy, Lankshear (1999) explains, “What literacy is consists in the forms textual engagement takes within specific material contexts of human practice” (n.p.). To give deference to child readers’ environment as the “specific material contexts” in which their literacy practices occur is to recognize how the immediate setting, culture, and tools jointly shape their transactional experiences. Providing latitude in the many possible ways they might respond to picturebooks necessitates a careful cultivation of this environment, for it diverges from CCSS’s vice-like grip on literacy learning. Reflecting on the need for “retheorizing early literacy learning as social practice” to enrich observations and expand understandings, Rowe (2010) asserts the need for studying material, spatial, and embodied features of literacy transactions as young children navigate local literacies particular to the social and cultural contexts in which they occur (p. 134). The Picturebook Project relationally foregrounds the aggregate co-constitution of environment and each child participant in the knowledge production and lived through experiences of observable,
microepisodically situated literacy events (Nespor & Groenke, 2009; Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

As a pragmatic design experiment, this qualitative study replaces passive reader consumption with multimodal and material engagement to provide young children with the opportunity to become co-creators of literary and social worlds that foreground their negotiation of meaning potentials. Like the young woman in Remedios Varos’ (1961) *Embroidering the Earth’s Mantle*, the central panel in her Surrealist triptych that juxtaposes confinement with liberation through imagination, elementary-aged child participants in The Picturebook Project have a similar potential in their reading of *metap*icturebooks without direct interference from ELA curricular standards and imposition of school settings. To curate their environment, literacy and art materials were purposefully chosen.

I designed and facilitated this study around select picturebooks representative of the dual trends that inspire creativity through literacy play and exploration of material affordances and metafictive devices. These *metap*icturebooks foreground a child reader’s agency as well as upend reading experiences typically associated with prescriptive reading instruction and materials. A public exhibition of child participants’ reading response artifacts opens dialogue about literacy practices in relation to the greater community’s educational values about creativity and visual literacy. Findings describe these children’s picturebook transactions, designed environment, and diverse community’s regard for such an out-of-school opportunity in the context of their sociohistorically situated perspectives about reading development and instruction.
Research Question

The Picturebook Project has been designed as a pragmatic, yet formative intervention to examine the mutually constitutive ways a child reader’s subjectivity, *metap* picturebooks featuring boundary breaking narratives and/or design affordances, and the influential role of materiality and existing cultural practices in a particular social context converge to construct an emerging assemblage of meaning potentials. Guided by picturebook scholarship, reader response theories, sociocultural orientation, and central research question, *what reading responses emerge through intra-actions between linguistically and culturally diverse children and their environment (setting, culture, and tools) during a pragmatic intervention at an urban community center?*, this micro/ethnographically informed case study explores creative transactional possibilities that transpire when elementary-aged children become emboldened to diverge from their in-school reading expectations.

Significance of Study

To date, there has been minimal scholarship that considers actual children’s multimodal transactions with these trendy *metap* picturebooks; rather the existing body of literature has generally emphasized verbal responses to picturebooks. Child participants in The Picturebook Project attended to particular picturebooks’ metafictional devices, materiality, and affordances. The open-endedness of this qualitative study’s research design welcomed all manner of transactional reading experiences. And so, reading became a much more pleasurable and playful reading experience than that which has
been codified and espoused by CCSS and its aligned classroom materials, such as level
texts of increasing complexity. Child participants determined how to transact with these
picturebooks—to create, to imagine, to subvert and so on. Thus, reading picturebooks
became a pursuit of wonder, a rescue operation, an act of censure, or all of these desires
and many more; it unleashed creative meaning potentials rather than rely on normalized
interpretations located within the “four corners of the text.”
CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As stated in chapter one, this study investigates an intervention for linguistically and culturally diverse elementary-aged children, often subject to a close adherence of an already restrictive reading curriculum. By studying the transactional experiences between child participants and their environment as well as their community’s reactions to these transactions in light of their literacy beliefs and practices, The Picturebook Project endeavors to renew interest in the aesthetic function of *meta*picturebooks for future reading instruction. The next two chapters illustrate the research procedures that I conducted before and refined after my case study had been put into practice—conceptual framework (chapter two) and literature review (chapter three). To realize this study, I inquired scholarship related to the topic of picturebooks and child reader responses to them preceded a critical survey of existing studies. The following theoretical definitions of these terms: (1) inform their utility as a way to access the expanding body of knowledge pertaining to this research problem as well as existing gaps; (2) set the narrow parameters of literature to be reviewed given this study’s research objectives; (3) guide the sociocultural orientation of this study that is anchored in reader response theory as a transactional experience of child reader-in-environment.

Defining Picturebooks

In the acknowledgments section of *The American Picturebook: From Noah’s Ark to the Beast Within*, Bader (1976), a former librarian and editor of Kirkus Reviews
chronicles the significant events in the development of the picture book genre as a scholarly artifact, source of young children’s entertainment, and reflection of the greater sociohistorical contexts. She proffers what has become the most oft-quoted definition in the field of children’s literature,

A picturebook is a text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of turning the page. (Bader, 1976, p. 1)

The term picturebook captures the demarcation between literature published for young children’s transactional reading experiences, and not necessarily for adults, and acknowledges how pictures and words cohere.

**Interplay of Words and Pictures**

Unlike illustrated books, those in which pictures serve as mere decoration, ancillary to textual narrative, e.g. Tasha Tudor’s black and white character sketches at the beginning of each chapter in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s (1911; 1962) *The Secret Garden* or, more recently, Peter Brown’s (2016) monochromatic sketches rendered in Photoshop that are scattered amongst his prose in the middle grades novel *The Wild Robot*, picturebooks’ “interdependence of pictures and words” endeavors a child reader to co-construct meaning from the entirety of the “semiotic landscape” at hand (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15). This word-picture relationship typically comprises a
picturebook’s principal multimodalities. Sipe (2008) explains, “as aesthetic wholes, picture-books combine words and visual images (and occasionally other modalities) in complicated ways to produce this unity” (p. 4). Since the sequence of images never entirely duplicates the verbal narrative nor vice-versa, there exists a potential for incongruity. Filling this semantic gap is tantamount to Iser’s (1978) convergence of reader and text to co-construct meaning and his theoretical rejection of any text’s univocal meaning, that is, in and of itself. Iser (1978) states, “it is the gaps, the fundamental asymmetry between text and reader, that give rise to communication in the reading process” (p. 167). Picturebooks’ gaps or indeterminacies function to invite a reader’s co-construction of meaning through semiotic transmediation, that is, a recursive or continuous process of oscillation. Readers interpret the written text in terms of the visual images, the visual images in terms of the written text, and subsequently both modes in terms of the overall compositional design.

Wide variations among the modal dominance of the visual and verbal semiotic interplay exist among different picturebooks. Wordless or nearly-wordless picturebooks favor static illustrations that principally carry the narrative. Even so, layered within these illustrations are visual representations of gesture, body language, or other noteworthy semiotic modes of communication. Picturebooks’ digital counterparts tend to feature dynamic images, animations, and often add sound effects. Available as downloadable apps on tablet or cellular devices, the experience of reading a digital picturebook may be likened to looking through a window. In a study comparing digital and print picturebook reading experiences, Mackey (2003) noted differences in the engagement and negotiated communication during partner readings among elementary-aged school children. Owing
to its denial of “the drama of the turning page” and tactility in the hands of a child reader, studies of child readers’ responses to digital picturebooks fall outside the purview of the literature review and research design. Only studies that feature children’s, that is preschool, elementary, and middle-school-aged multimodal responses to the “total design” of analog or printed picturebooks have been considered.

**Metapicturebooks**

Intentionally focusing on just *metap* picturebooks arising from the dual trends in children’s literature, boundary breaking narratives and/or playful mediation, would be too exclusionary. And so, my literature review has been broadened to picturebooks that feature metafiction, a foregrounding of a story’s fictionality and shattering of the illusory façade of its secondary world. According to Waugh (1984), metafiction “self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (p. 2). This attention functions as a reflection on the interpretive processes through which fictional worlds are constructed and the porousness of boundaries separating them. Metafiction is not tantamount to postmodernism. That epistemology wrestles with uncertainties, ambiguities, and disruptions to interrogate dominant liberal humanist assumptions that attach importance to objectivity and universal truths. Postmodernism “celebrates the freedom of possibility” with emphasis on subjectivity and individual construction of meaning (Nealon & Giroux, 2012, p. 111). To the literary establishment, postmodernism acts as a “deliberate affront”
to conventional decorum and cultural hierarchies of power (Brooker, 2014, p. 2), or to the so-called literary canon.

Children’s literature scholars would likely regard *metapicturebooks’* prominent display of multimodal carriers of meaning—words and pictures—that complement, contravene, or enhance narrative content as subversive, a disruption of logo-centric narrative conventions. Subversive meaning isn’t attached to the *metapicturebook* per se, but rather, to the transactional possibilities of interpretation between reader and *metapicturebook*. As readers co-construct meaning during a reading event occurring within a particular context, a *metapicturebook* comes into being, that is, meaning is actualized through a transactional process between child reader and environment. In *Playing with Picturebooks: Postmodernism and the Postmodernesque* Allan (2012) acknowledges a departure from metafictive subversion likened to experimental picturebooks that directly challenge dominant literary conventions. The pervasiveness of mass media has brought on a shift in postmodern fiction, for television and the like have “co-opted” its tools (p. 22). Irony and self-referentiality as the primary means of postmodern subversion have become mainstream. As the dual trends earlier noted evidence, playfulness has become increasingly commonplace.

Designated as so-called “classic” postmodern picturebooks, Scieszka’s (1992) *The Stinky Cheese Man* and Wiesner’s (2001) *The Three Pigs* critique the universal truths and textual authority of liberal humanism, those dominant ideologies that become naturalized, not recognized as a historical construction of reality. Allan (2012) extensively discusses the above-named picturebooks to point out how each overtly challenges “the apparent ‘naturalness’ of the various narrative strategies” (p. 29). For
example, in Scieszka’s named picturebook, a cacophony of fairy tale characters competes with Jack, the narrator of beanstalk fame, to playfully vie for the implied reader’s attention, thereby subverting the conventional authority of the narrator and providing a plurality of voices and possible meanings. Wiesner’s retelling of a familiar folktale begins with the customary third-person narrator, “Once upon a time there were three pigs.” Soon the first pig is blown out of the illustrated frame into a liminal space that blatantly violates the artificial boundaries between worlds and destabilizes the represented fictional story world projected in a text. Allan (2012) writes, “postmodernism seeks to unmask the constructed nature of these ‘truths’, not by denying the ‘truths’ of reality and fiction, but by contesting them” (p. 80). Instead of reification through a tidy narrative resolution, postmodern picturebooks challenge such certainties through indeterminacy and ambiguity.

Noting the shift of cultural conditions from the later twentieth century to the early aughts, Allan proposes “postmodernesque” more suitably characterizes those picturebooks that interrogate the far reaches of a postmodern world—interconnectivity of globalization, pervasive mass media, and consumer consumption of cultural commodities. Among her international selection of titles exemplifying “postmodernesque” is Child’s (1999) *Clarice Bean, That’s Me* in which the titular character takes the implied reader through a guided tour of her family who reunite in front of the television set (Allan, 2012, p. 156). By referencing Bakhtin’s (1984) characterization of Rabelais’ carnivalesque writing that overturns hierarchical powers and conventions (p. 24), Allan uses the suffix –*esque* not necessarily as a descriptor, but rather, a functional tool grounded in playfulness and nonconformity to critique
characteristics of postmodernity like consumer greed and its effects on the construction of identity and subjectivity. She explains,

postmodernesque picturebooks turn their attention to the critique of the postmodern world: a globalized, mediated, hyperreal world in which, seemingly the only way to make any sense of it is through rampant consumption of goods, services and signs, and in which individuals construct multiple identities and learn to navigate through multiple realities. (Allan, 2012, p. 141)

Personally, Allan’s notion of “postmodernesque” conjures up a recent viral image of high school-aged students sitting on a bench inside an art museum transfixed on their smart phones, reading about a renaissance painting rather than experiencing it for themselves or texting each other instead of whispering. To a postmodern viewer, simulation of a represented event trumps the evocation of actual experience (Allan, 2012, p. 159).

Perhaps, this playful image also relates to the current federal literacy policies; namely, the expectation of CCSS that a reader is to remain outside of the text in lieu of and evocation of lived experience.

Whether or not interconnectivity may be attributable to the transition between modernist and postmodernist society and reflective of the phenomenon of digitization and globalization in which consumer capitalism encourages consumption as well as raises global consciousness, though worthy of deep contemplation, that discourse reaches beyond this study’s research objectives. Be that as it may, I liken *metapicturebooks* to being postmodernesque, given Bird’s (2016) lamentation about “THE SLOW DEATH OF META” for their humor has evolved to become increasingly mainstream. The availability of many of the featured *metapicturebook* titles in this study at so-called “big
box” stores and online retailers attests to, perhaps, this consumerism. But for now, I temper my claim only to say that the reading of *metapicturebooks* becomes a potential disruption of those objective truths still serviced by current literacy practices, namely those codified in CCSS.

More circumscribed than “postmodernesque,” Dresang (1999; 2008b) grounds her proposed Radical Change theory in three influential principles heightened by an increasingly omnipresent digital society as well as Rosenblatt’s contributions of transactional stances in reader response theory. Seeking to better understand the synergy of changing informational resources and youth in the digital age, radical change theory untangles the web of digital interactivity, connectivity, and access emerging in twenty-first century children’s books. Her theoretical framework represents “fundamental change, departure from the usual or traditional literature for youth, although still related to it” (4). Initially naming Macaulay’s (1990) *Black and White* as her “prototype” for the achieving new levels of heightened synergy between words and pictures, Dresang (2008a) also notes the rise of picturebooks in which “characters exit the story and speak to the reader” (p. 296). She cites Watt’s (2007) feline protagonist and red pen aficionado Chester as another example as well as broadens her net of dynamic books to pop-ups or those that are paper-engineered and require more physical interaction on account of the environment. Indicators of one category of radical change to the body of children’s literature—Changing Forms and Formats—include,

... graphics in new forms and formats; words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy; nonlinear or nonsequential organization and format; multiple layers of meaning from a variety of perspectives; cognitively, emotionally, and/or
physically interactive formats; sophisticated presentations; and unresolved storylines. (Dresang, 2009, p. 96)

While *metapicturebooks* parade some of these indicators, especially “physically interactive formats” and novel perspectives, e.g., a self-aware picturebook as story character, I hesitate to go so far as to infer that these appearances of forms and formats are likely attributable to or in direct response to the digital age. Rather, I propose that an intermediary is piloting this cause-effect relationship. Affordance theory as it has been advanced by scholars in the field of human-computer interaction underlies my understanding about the connection between an object’s perceived design and a person’s possible actions that have manifested during this digital age.

**Peritextual Elements**

Some of those multimodal representations that precede and follow the body of a narrative, referred to as peritext, a term coined by Genette (1997), encompass the “more conspicuous parts of the book” (Higonnet, 1990, p. 47). These include, but are not limited to removable dust jackets, beginning endpapers, illustrations before title page, title pages, half title pages, frontispiece, dedication/copyright pages, final endpapers. For years children’s literature scholars have theorized about the potential of the peritext in its contribution to a young reader’s meaning making. Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) have observed that “the narrative can indeed start on the cover, and it can go beyond the last page onto the back cover” (p. 241). Noting the impetus to maintain aesthetic coherence from cover to cover, Nodelman (1988) asserts, “Illustrators often try to create appropriate
expectations by pictures on covers or dust jackets that appear nowhere else in a book and that sum up the essential nature of a story” (p. 49). Endpapers have been increasingly utilized to contribute to this coherence as a way to complement, contradict, enhance, or emphasize the narrative (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Deeming endpapers to be semiotic “resources for literary and aesthetic interpretation,” Sipe and McGuire (2006) even created a typology to describe their functions in the reading process.

Much like Meek’s (1988) reminder that “every text teaches what readers learn,” Martinez, Stier and Falcon’s (2015) content analysis of Caldecott award-winning picturebooks spanning from 1938-2013 not only confirms peritextual element’s potential for meaning making, but also notes the more-recent trend of unfolding the plot in the opening peritext. The “playground of the peritext” (Higonnet, 1990, p. 47), according to Martinez, Stier and Falcon, necessitates “careful inspection” for the child reader “to find clues that point to the genre of a narrative, as well as important evidence related to who the characters are, what those characters may be like, where a story takes place, and key elements that may be part of the story” (2015, p. 239). Not only do actual child readers’ hands-on navigation of picturebooks fall outside the scope of this study, the above-quoted suggestions hinges on an approach to reading that privileges cognition, employing comprehension strategies to make sense of the narrative. Contemplation of metapicturebooks’ peritextual design elements as well as physical structures that feature perceivable material and surface properties that potentially relate to a reader’s dynamic evocation of cognitive and affective aspects of consciousness may help to better understand the “limitless” possibilities of reading experiences.
Affordance Theory

Bader’s definition of a picturebook’s “total design” typically extends to scholarship that closely examines the peritext, the multimodal representations found on parts of a book that surround the body of a narrative. Sipe’s (1998) glossary of picturebook terminology geared towards educators, though informative, is one such example. He merely scratches the surface of this “total design” and its “limitless” potential that contribute to meaning making. Beyond a baby or toddler’s board or bath books or research on digital transmediation, picturebooks are often overlooked as tangible objects with dimensionality to be held in the lap or hands of a child reader. This disregard fails to take into account how some meta picturebooks draw a child reader’s attention to the tactility of this material object. Meta picturebooks have a self-awareness of their tactility, and most pointedly, how their material design shapes a child’s reading experience. To better understand how a child reader responds, I propose a more encompassing understanding of “total design” that contemplates affordance theory.

Popularized in human-computer interaction scholarship, affordance theory presupposes that the design aspect of an object suggests the manner in which it should be used (Norman, 2013). An affordance is a visually perceptible clue as to its operation, function, and use, but not arbitrarily learned convention. At its inception Gibson (1977) suggests that there needn’t be an “excessive amount of learning” for a person to perceive an object’s affordances, or action possibilities available in an environment (p. 82). For example, the spine of a hardcover picturebook in which the pages have been gathered and bound hinders certain actions for it cannot be easily pulled apart. The separation between
each fore page in the bookblock or textblock allows for opening along that edge, so the spine becomes a hinge. In perceiving these affordances, a reader may readily glean how to grasp the front and back covers to pull it open. He later writes, “The affordances of the environment are what it offers…what it provides or furnishes…” (Gibson, 1979, p. 127). Affordances are not learned cultural conventions. For a young reader to know the difference between the right or wrong way to open a picturebook so that the words and pictures don’t appear upside-down is an early literacy book-handling skill. St. Amant (1999) further breaks down affordances into four separate concepts – relationships, actions, perceptions, and mental constructs – and discusses how to incorporate the idea of affordances into a user interface by focusing on the connection between action and relationship (p. 319-320).

The following example makes use of the premise from a popular picturebook for early readers, Harold and the Purple Crayon (Johnson, 1955) to concretize St. Amant’s abstract concepts. A young boy named Harold sees a purple crayon for the first time. He realizes the possibility of reaching for it and putting it in his hand in a way that fits easily in his grasp. That perceptual recognition of holding or grasping the purple crayon represents an action. Affordances are also the properties of perceived relationships (St. Amant, 1999, p. 320), that is, the purple crayon affords such a grip due to its perceived properties—dimensions, mass, and texture—in relation to the size and physiology of Harold’s hand (p. 318-9). Little or no deliberation is required as Harold intuits how to grasp this purple crayon through direct perception. St. Amant (1999) explains, “designed, perceivable affordances can directly influence usability” (p. 320). For Harold to sensorially perceive the consistent properties of all the other crayons in his crayon box in
relation to his hand’s grasp, a change of mental representation occurs; affordances are also mental constructs (St. Amant, 1999, p. 321).²

Though ample references to the word “affordances” appear in children’s literature scholarship, few examples explore this conceptualization as it relates to printed, that is, hardcover picturebooks. Most literature mentions affordances of digital picturebook apps (Schwebs, 2014) or, fleetingly, in relation to the semiotic resources of picturebooks (Sipe, 1998; Whitelaw, 2017). Early literacy researchers have unwittingly scrutinized picturebook affordances in relation to actionable behaviors evidenced during young children’s formative years. Reporting on observable proficient reading behaviors of five-year-olds, Clay (2001) suggests that these learners exhibit certain schema, or mental constructs, for visually attending to print while reading picturebooks. “Directional behaviors manage the order in which readers and writers attend to anything in print. Gaining control of them is a foundational step in literacy as oral language is matched to written language” (Clay, 2001, p. 118). To Clay (2005), determining a child’s concepts about print (CAP), knowledge about the way verbal language is represented in print,

² There is quite a bit of intentionality behind this choice of protagonist from Harold and the Purple Crayon to elaborate on affordance theory in ways that depart from its application to human-computer interaction. Throughout the Early Reader book, Harold’s purple crayon becomes his conduit for actualizing his creative imaginings. In his dual biography on Crockett Johnson and Ruth Krauss, Nel (2012) attributed moral responsibility to Harold’s imagination, for it “can show us that what does exist is not necessarily what ought to exist or what might exist” (p. 150). A purple crayon, by design, is an open-ended tool in the environment that can be held in alternate ways like between fingers or toes. It can be rolled flat against a hard surface to rub color onto paper or incline to test potential energy. It can even be snapped in half, gasp! But, perhaps by learned convention, Harold keeps a consistent grip on the crayon until after he drew up the covers to his chin, when he fell asleep and dropped it to the floor. The crayon itself ascribes cultural meanings associated with the color purple. It doesn’t resemble the all-too-familiar Crayola® version of crayons.
including book handling skills and conventions, upon entrance to school serves as a predictor for conventional reading outcomes and an indicator of reading readiness (Clay, 2005, p. 41). A child reader’s playful mediation of a range of affordances featured in a self-referential metapicturebook attends to its material construction as part of the “total design.” Existing research has not taken up any critical interrogation of elementary-aged children’s aesthetic transactions with neither affordances nor metapicturebooks. To fill this gap, the Picturebook Project looks at how this playfulness influences child reader’s experience and literacy learning, for this materiality and tactility go far beyond the regulated interests of ELA standards.

**Defining Reader Response as a Transactional Paradigm**

Nearly thirty years after Louise Rosenblatt (1968) pioneered a transactional theory of reading in *Literature as Exploration* that signaled a departure from New Criticism’s elevation of the text to be an object of interpretation irrespective of the reader as spectator, her interpretive paradigm gained traction in literary and literacy circles. Reader response theories not only attend to the generative dynamics between reader and the text but also deny the objectification of any text as a “static set of meanings” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 57). This transactional stance regards reading as an active process of co-construction of meaning. Within any given reading event, picturebook and reader become changed during this transformative or lived through experience. In *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem* Rosenblatt (1978) explains, “a text, once it leaves its author’s hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work” (p. ix).
Meaning does not reside in the printed text or in the reader but locates its co-construction in the continuity of this reciprocal relationship (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1063).

**Lived Experiences**

Transacting with a *metapicturebook* is a dialogical; a reader selectively attends to a particular aspect of the environment and that choice becomes ceaselessly revised (Rosenblatt, 1985). Rosenblatt (1986) elaborates, “The transaction with the signs of the text activates a two-way, or, better, circular, stream of dynamically intermingled symbolizations which mutually reverberate and merge” (p. 123). But this lived experience occurs in an experiential and not a vacuous space void of any situatedness (Faust, 2000). “Context,” as noted by Rosenblatt (1985) in her “transactional view of the reading event,” becomes “a unique coming-together of a particular personality and a particular text at a particular time and place under particular circumstances” (p. 58). In any given reading transaction, the individual reader and environment coalesce. A reader’s evocative interpretation is highly individualized and reflective of the particular sociocultural context. Grounding her transactional approach in Dewey and Bentley’s (1949) pragmatic educational philosophy, Rosenblatt endeavored to make sense of readers’ transactions with literary works of art as lived experiences (Connell, 1996).

For Dewey, experience refers to the transaction of human beings with their immediate environment, rather than the interaction between them. Rethinking observations of “provisionally separated segments of inquiry” (p. 133), such as the
dualistic division of stimulus-response, to view the “organism-in-environment-as-a-whole,” Dewey and Bentley (1949) define transaction:

…neither to be understood as if it “existed” apart from any observation, nor as if it were a manner of observing “existing in a man’s head” in presumed independence of what is observed. The “transaction,” as an object among and along with other objects, is to be understood as unfractured observation—just as it stands, at this era of the world’s history, with respect to the observer, the observing, and the observed—and as it is affected by whatever merits or defects it may prove to have when it is judged, as it surely will be in later times, by later manners. (p. 131)

Dewey circumvents oppositional tensions between subject and object to locate the active construction of knowledge in the “organism-in-environment-as-a-whole” transaction. In this “participatory and co-constitutive process” (Vanderstraeten, 2002, p. 241), constructivism prevails. Each reader cannot be regarded as “apart from” the immediate environment, that is, the setting, or social context, and cultural tools, for each shapes and is shaped by the other in a “mutually-constitutive situation” (Rosenblatt, 2013, p. 924). Reader-in-environment-as-a-whole epitomizes this transactional paradigm as lived experience. Additional sections in this chapter more precisely clarify the sociocultural dimensions of this environment as well as the intra-actions between the co-constitution of individual reader and environment from which meaning, I argue, ostensibly emerges as reader response but in multimodal ways.
**Transactional Stances**

A child reader’s positioning in relation to a *metapicturebook* reflects his or her un/conscious or un/mediated attentiveness to the context and purpose for that transactional experience. This positioning is more than just being under the watchful eye of a classroom teacher to complete a reading assignment or passage, for the child collective reading experiences at, in, and/or out of school may reflexively influence his or her transactional experience in any given moment. If, day after day, that child has been expected to sequentially retell a story by writing about the characters, setting, beginning, middle, and end, problem and solution, favorite parts and connection to self or world as prompted by a graphic organizer, then reading, runs the risk of solely becoming a replication of narrative elements as the mean principal means for comprehension. Lack of innovation to this instructional practice becomes limiting. Instead, to be open to all experiential possibilities The Picturebook Project follows William Cowper’s (1785) adage, “Variety is the very spice of life, That gives it all its flavor.”

Rosenblatt (2013) analogizes consciousness to “a stream flowing through darkness” in transactional stance guides a reader to the particular waters to illuminate and leave in shadow (p. 934). She distinguishes a continuum between predominantly efferent and aesthetic reading stances but notes that experiencing a text never wholly falls at one end or another. In looking at a picturebook, a child reader may oscillate between stances. That graphic organizer may privilege one stance over the other. An efferent stance “focuses attention on public meaning, abstracting that is to be retained after the reading—to be recalled, paraphrased, acted on, analyzed” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 56). This
transactional stance underscores the importance of keeping hold of a literary or informational understanding for future use, e.g., giving a synopsis of a recently read book or recipe to a friend. Owing to the ease in which this retention of objective meaning may be assessed to demonstrate mastery of certain reading proficiencies and textual analyses, CCSS tend to lean more heavily towards the efferent side of the continuum of transactional stances.

On the other hand, an aesthetic stance, according to Rosenblatt, “is focused primarily on what is being personally lived through, cognitively, affectively, *during* the reading event” and even “continuing awareness” beyond the text’s end (1978, p. 29). More aesthetically-oriented stances undergo a process of evocation, i.e., the reader constructs a “poem” in his or her psyche. Subjective meaning is realized during this creative process that happens during and after a reading of a text. A book may linger in a reader’s mind as he or she continues to make personal connections to the co-constructed meanings. A reader may wish for an alternate ending and communicate one, or imaginatively reconstruct a narrative element to extend its meaning or make it more suitable to his or her liking. That reader’s situatedness in a particular environment also informs not only the transactional stance, but the manner in which efferent or aesthetic responses may be expressed.

**Interpretive Communities**

All readings of texts are transactions, but each is unique to the “mutually-constitutive situation” at hand and for what un/conscious and un/mediated attentive
purpose or stance of a reader. Rosenblatt writes, “Every reading act is an event, a
transaction involving a particular reader and a particular configuration of marks on a
page, and-occurring at a particular time in a particular context” (1988, p. 4). Rosenblatt’s
transactional paradigm merely scratches the surface of those unique sociocultural
contexts shaping and shaped by the reading process. Heath’s (1983) groundbreaking
ethnographic study, *Ways with Words*, redefines literacy as a social practice.

As a longitudinal ethnography conducted between 1969 and 1978 in out-of-school
contexts within two communities—Trackton, an African American community and
Roadville, a white working-class community, Heath “lived, worked, and played with the
children and their families and friends in Roadville and Trackton” (p. 5). Her meticulous
documentation of talk, verbal language in use during face-to-face conversational
interactions with children, contributed to rich descriptions of “ethnographies of
communication” (p. 7). Detailing the manner in which she documented the depth of
literate traditions, Heath (1983) writes in the prologue: “The ways of eating, living,
sleeping, worshipping, using space, and filling time which surrounded these language
learners would have to be accounted for as part of the milieu in which the processes of
language learning took place” (p. 3). Her analysis attends to the acquisition of language
and literacy knowledge produced within these social environments, especially for the
purposes of particular “literacy events,” previously defined by Heath (1982) as “any
action sequence involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or
comprehension of print plays a role” (p. 50). Interpreting literacy events against the
relational backdrop of observed sociocultural patterns yields Heath’s understanding of
how each community acculturates their children through entrenched, value-laden
language and literacy socialization processes that diverge from middle-class Mainstreamers’ preference for reiterating decontextualized school-based literacy practices.

Heath’s findings’ sociocultural dimensions align to a degree with reader response theorist Stanley Fish (1980). He posits that an individualistic response to a text is an impossibility since “everyone is situated somewhere” (p. 319). Any response becomes the product of the interpretive strategies employed by a community to which the reader belongs. It is a socially situated act of constructing a poem, not construing one. (p. 327). An interpretive community sets the boundaries of a reader’s response so as rebuff the possibility of relativism, any meaning goes, while still favoring agency of reader-in-environment-as-a-whole and dismissing objectivity of text. Fish notes, “it is not that the presence of poetic qualities that compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities” (p. 326). Any given interpretive community to which a reader belongs shapes the particular “attention” to be paid to discoverable possibilities that lend meaning. Meaning is constructed by individual readers in the particular sociocultural context of their immediate “interpretive community” to which that reader belongs. It preferences what conventions and norms guide that reader’s interpretation. Even so, notes Connell (2008), “A transactional approach rejects the idea that valid interpretation comes from a single correct meaning generated by an interpretive community, and it also rejects the claim of relativism, in which each and every personal interpretation is automatically acceptable” (p. 109). CCSS neglect the prospective educational value of emerging meaning potentials between reader and text, for there can be only one best choice to ‘bubble in’ from among the given
selections. In standardized assessments, alternative responses that deviate from the correct answer or prescribed rubric as defined by test-makers are not only devalued but penalize the test-taker for submitting a wrong answer. Not only does The Picturebook Project reject these restrictive parameters for meaning-making, it also embraces the innovation that may found in such relativism.

**Reframing Transaction as Intra-Action**

Close reading is an enduring legacy of New Critics’ hermeneutical stance towards the traditional tripartite division of literature “—the *author*, the author’s *text*, and the *reader* of the text—[that] had only one element that was fixed, stable, and capable of objective investigation, the text” (Sipe, 2008, p. 45). CCSS’s drive to demonstrable grade-level mastery of written texts is tantamount to a one-way display of power and authority suspicious of the reader’s roles in the production of meaning and performed enactments of lived and imagined possibilities. Preferring readers to unmask a text’s hidden meanings through use of comprehension strategies discounts their innovative revelations of meaning possibilities (that go beyond the “four corners of the text”) relative to the context and reflective of their subjectivities. Adoption of CCSS has reinvigorated the long-standing subject-object standoff, does meaning reside in the text or the reader?

Numerous drafts of this study’s research question mark my entry into this fray. I hesitated to designate child readers as subjects of this study acting upon picturebooks in a social context replete with cultural tools or vice versa. Under a transactional paradigm,
they are mutually constitutive. Even so, dichotomous subject and object classifications ascribe an imbalance of power, thereby establishing a hierarchy of representation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For example, sole emphasis on a child reader’s performative recitation of a picturebook using a ‘five-finger’ retelling glove (e.g., character, setting, beginning, middle, and end) using connectives (e.g., first, next, then, last) diminishes the reciprocal relationship between meaning-making and social context. In addition, using the palm of the hand to cue his or her favorite part assumes that child’s subjective judgement of the story is positive. There exists little room for indifference towards the story. This failure to heed that child reader’s situatedness within an interpretive community and ongoing multimodal communications about the picturebook that shape his or her responses marginalizes his or her reading experience. Perhaps a fellow classmate’s exasperated sigh, eye roll, and tossing aside of the picturebook out of infuriation upon reading that dissatisfying resolution may have influenced that child’s dislike. In his essay “In Defense of Reading: Or, Why Reading Still Matters in a Contextualist Age” Armstrong (2011) advocates, “The actual event of meaning needs to be analyzed in each case in order to determine the relation of use and context” (p. 91). For this study, I sought to remain open to the many possibilities of this co-constitutive relation between child reader and environment; accordingly, my research question, study design, and data analysis consistently flatten prevailing hierarchical representations.

Dynamism of relations between child reader and environment as meaning is constructed varies among reading response theorists, yet each recognizes that different readers construct different meanings from the same text. These relations aren’t always deemed to have equal weight in the process of meaning making. Sipe (2008) likens these
unequal relations to a continuum that includes: (A) reader responses shaped by the text at one end; (B) the reader-based theories of Iser and Rosenblatt that strike a balance between the two poles in the middle; and (C) totally autonomous readers at the opposite end from (A). Fish’s evolution of views across his writings illustrate the wide range of possible theories that exist between (A) and (C) and his enchantment in discerning the onus of meaning-making. In asserting the absence of any objective meaning in a text, Fish (1980) declares in an essay on “affective criticism” that “it relieves me of the obligation to be right (a standard that simply drops out) and demands only that I be interesting” (p. 1980). That represents (C). After toying with this ‘anything goes’ relativism, he later retracts it to delimit transactional experiences. An interpretive community’s beliefs about literacy may resonate with a particular child reader in a particular moment so as to reinforce a certain response while precluding others. I somewhat inverse his supposition for the purposes of The Picturebook Project to suggest that as part of the environment, a metapicturebook that features particular metafictive devices and/or showcases a particular affordance may also narrow a reader’s transactional possibilities. Both instances represent (B). Backtracking to one of Fish’s earliest works, he details a self-reflective tracing of his moment-by-moment interpretive process occurring in his mind. His literary understanding gleaned from reading Milton’s *Paradise Lost* becomes an event “happening to, and with the participation of” him (p. 51). This demonstrates (C).

Taking a step back from the power struggles between reader and text, I propose a reframing of this transactional paradigm respective of these oft-cited literary theorists whilst contemporaneously critiquing the genesis of meaning. Philosophies of French
poststructuralists, namely Deleuze and Guattari, inspire this study’s receptiveness to lived experiences that create new meaning potentials in unpredictable ways. I argue that the dynamic co-constitution of subject-object relations unfolds in the so-called “here and now”—a transitory space that welcomes indeterminate progressions towards meanings that may become. While I piggyback on Armstrong’s emphasis on historicity or “meaning then” that traces the originating circumstances of text production (to which I’d also add, or prior experiences of the reader), his uncoupling of past and present as discrete entities signals my nuanced point of departure. He writes, “the place where “meaning then” meets “meaning now” is the lived experience of reading” (2011, p. 94). Though I concur that there exists a synergy between past and present, I believe their coalescence becomes indiscernible. While “meaning then” may influence a reader’s lived experience here and now, it is not a straightforward causation. Apart from any additional mitigations, past conjurings appear unto themselves. They are fallible simulations of memory, a virtual remembering of what once was actualized by way of perception and a current anticipation of future possibilities yet to come.

Conceptualizing the transactional paradigm between reader and multimodal picturebook as a process of filling the semantic gaps surely benefits our understanding of perceptual processes at play; however, it also serves as a precursor to understanding how this subject-object relation becomes “simultaneously present and imperceptible” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 196). Dualistic significations of subject and object denotes stasis, that is, a stable world of existence limited by perception. In other words, what I see/feel/hear/smell/taste is what there is, even though others may see/feel/hear/smell/taste differently than me. In The Logic of Sense Deleuze (1990) proposes that being-
perceptible is a mere stopgap in the unconscious and unending flow of becoming-imperceptible (Colebrook, 2002). Becoming endlessly pushes the boundaries of what is known—real and unknown—virtual. May (2003) writes that becoming “jettisons traditional philosophy’s search for stable identities and allows oneself to see things by means of instability, play, and ceaseless creativity” (p. 148). Although creative potentialities abound, they remain virtual tendencies, i.e., singularities not yet actualized. Singularities are prospective re-makings that diverge from what is known. Rajchman elaborates on Deleuze’s term haecceity to make the important distinction between a singularity’s individuation and individualization. The latter is the perceived “instantiation of anything,” while the former retains atemporal indeterminacy (2000, p. 85). Haecceity is a singularity without “a beginning nor an end, origin, nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome” (p. 263). Returning to this movement from being-perceptual to becoming-imperceptible, Delueze and Guattari (1987) write,

> Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object. Perception will confront its own limit; it will be in the midst of things, throughout its own proximity, as the presence of one haecceity in another, the prehension of one by the other or the passage from one to the other: Look only at the movements, this symbiosis between subject and object in becoming-imperceptible. (p. 282)
While a child reader may visually perceive the die-cut holes featured in a picturebook, meaning has yet to emerge; however, prehensile touching of the edges or poking fingers through the hole may occur. Supposing that child had prior experience with such an affordance, past perceptions allow for the present recall of mental constructs or constrain future actionable possibilities to comport with learned conventions, thereby lessening recognition prospective differences yet to be actualized. Not until child and picturebook (and the constituent environs) become mutually constitutive, that is to say, at once real and virtual, will singularities that diverge from the known emerge.

To better capture this co-constitutive relationship for the purposes of this study, I borrow, just as feminist scholars did, from the physicist Barad’s (2007) term “intra-action.” Intra-action better conveys this mutually constitutive entanglement that comes from within this symbiotic relationship. Barad writes, “in contrast to the usual ‘interaction’, which assumes that there are separate individual [or autonomous] agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their interaction” (p.33). Autonomy arises from within this symbiotic coalescence of child reader and environment. Intra-actions become-imperceptible unto themselves as known perceptions (of the present and of past simulations being recalled in the present) emerge at once and in conjunction with new meaning potentials. Through these intra-actions, meaning is unmade from what it was and re-made through imagining what it can be, but not yet is. It is possible for these intra-actions to yield transformative differences, but those singularities remain invisible until actualized. Reader response is the movement from being-perceptible or sequential perception of the actual to becoming-imperceptible (and atemporal), i.e., intra-actions
between perceptions-singularities that are at once actual-virtual, to re-actualized simulations of new meaning potentials by way of lived experience. These re-actualizations are at the heart of this study’s the research objectives. They make visible evocations of aesthetic responses constructed from intra-active relations between child readers and the environment.

**Sociocultural Dimensions of Literacy Play**

Transacting with picturebooks is a way to learn through and with the emergent *making of things*, e.g., ongoing construction of tangible artifacts, communicative acts or indescribable feelings that a reader deems important or beneficial to his or her lived experience. That active co-construction generates meaning that concomitantly imbues the culturally mediated experiential space (Faust, 2000) wherein reader response happens. Whether it’s through talking, writing, drawing, painting, sculpting, dancing or some other multimodal means of artistic or playful expression, that emergent *making of things* mediates and is mediated by the environment. More than any perception of semiotic representation made in a bounded context, intra-action is the invisible phenomenon that orients a child reader and sociocultural context to indeterminate meaning potentials (MacLure, 2013b).

Aesthetic experiences also become cultural tools to wield (Smagorinsky, 2013; Moll, 1990). Borrowing Smagorinsky’s definition, culture “embodies mutual values of community in question” and includes “recurring social practices and their artifacts that give order, purpose, and continuity to social life” (2011, p. 130). Concerned with how
schools place limitations on cultural tool kits by conceiving of learning to read as a discrete, acultural act much like the CCSS poses its elementary ELA curriculum, Smagorinsky argues that this viewpoint “restricts students in terms of the meaning available for them to construct” (2009; 2011, p. 129). It assigns fixed, perceptible meanings. Reading becomes an exercise in reproducing objective meanings. Appreciating aesthetic experiences as intra-active phenomena overthrows the subject-object dichotomy and thereby, calls attention to the symbiosis of child reader, sociocultural dimensions, and environment. The following overview of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theories of learning and associated play pedagogies conceptualize the meaning-making possibilities of this generative process of “becoming-imperceptible” from which creativity and imagination emerge.

Creativity and Imagination

To Vygotsky aesthetic development is a cultural practice of emotional expression that emerges through creative activity. Young children are inspired by aesthetic experiences or cultural tools in their social context, become affectively engaged with them, and undertake initiatives to create something new. Unlike reproductions of the past that guide the future and minimize the prospects of transformative change, according to Vygotsky (2004), “It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present” (p. 9). Creativity in action becomes innovation, an expression of possibility. Vygotsky (1997) takes on a dialectical approach to creativity. A sociocultural lens directs attention
to a child’s development or “internalization of cultural meanings into individual senses based on experience of artifact” (Moran, 2010, p. 321). Subjectivity springs from this internalization, or rather this becoming-imperceptible. Its re-actualization generates a lived aesthetic experience which may be observed as a marker of creativity. Creativity in action is an “externalization of idiosyncratic senses that are socially negotiated by others as worthy and transformative” (Ibid.). It lies in the reader’s co-constitutive negotiation of culture and production of meaning.

Imagination begets creativity. In learning and development imagination arises from social interaction and the particular cultural-historical moment occurring in a child’s life. It operates dialectically with emotion, for imaginative undertakings concretize fantastical thought, and with reality by way of perceptual rationality (Nilsson & Ferholt, 2014, p.929). Imagination negotiates inconsistencies of a child’s mind between the reality of their social contexts and playful desires to enable emergent creative syntheses or artifacts.

**Play Pedagogy**

Relatedly, play is imagination in action. Lindqvist, a designer of “playworlds” in Swedish Emilio-Reggio inspired preschools, reinterprets Vygotsky’s theory of play by linking it to his theory of art (2003). In her promotion of a play pedagogy children’s literature becomes central to the adult-child creation of “playworlds” through aesthetic activities like dramatization. To Lindqvist (2003), Vygotsky conceptualizes imagination as “a creative process that develops in play because a real situation takes a new and
unfamiliar meaning” (p. 249). Such child’s play differs from everyday socially-mediated activities, for the design of a creative pedagogy of play is predicated upon the selected ways in which adults will facilitate or join children in their play. I had the responsibility to decide which materials and metapicturebooks to initially select for Based on my instructional experiences, knowledge about existing scholarship and publishing trends, and understanding of child development, the manner in which I facilitated sessions of The Picturebook Project had some bearing on the child participants engaged play. They had autonomy too. Their responses shaped my facilitation. We became co-constructors of the environment. Vygotsky (1995) writes, “imagination operates not freely, but directed by someone else’s experience, as if according to someone else’s instructions” (p. 17). In an ethnographic study Nilsson and Ferholt (2014) bring an iteration of Lindqvist’s “playworld” to a kindergarten and first grade classroom in the U.S. as a formative intervention, and then, compare it to the exploratory play occurring at a Swedish preschool. Their study’s findings present the following three conditions assumed to be “essential in the creation of the shared responsibility for directing the adult-child joint play”:

First, adults in a playworld enter fully into children's play by taking on play roles, putting on costumes and entering character. In doing so they are required to partially step outside of their role as teacher and to join the children in the role of fellow actor. Second, children as well as the adults co-construct the environment in which play takes place. The children do not play in an environment that has been designed for them by adults alone. Third, Lindqvist's pedagogy grounds play in works of children's
literature that address epistemological and ethical dilemmas that are of
great interest to people in a variety of life stages. (Nilsson & Ferholt,
2014, p. 942-943)

No longer are early childhood educators so-called “sage on a stage” from which children
reproduce or replicate “something that already exists,” such as conformity to a teacher-
directed craft or even a formulaic way to respond to picturebooks (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 8).
Co-constitutive creative acts are reliant on imagination in the emergent making of things,
whether those things include a novel object or lived experience. Even imitative play
becomes a “creative reworking” of a child’s previous experiences to “construct a new
reality” that, according to Vygotsky “conforms to his [or her] own needs or desires” (p. 11-2).

Vygotsky’s conceptualization of zone of proximal development (ZPD) has an
essential role in play pedagogy. In the ZPD of play or “the distance between the actual
developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of
potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in
collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), creative activities
generate new possibilities. Imaginary situations in play are rule-bound, but that doesn’t
necessarily mean the child-player is a rule follower. Vygotsky writes, “If the child is
playing the role of a mother, then she has rules of maternal behavior. The role the child
fulfills, and her relation to the object (if the object has changed meaning), will always
stem from rules” (1978, p. 95). The creation of an imaginary situation emancipates a
young child from situational constraints, but the exercise of self-control indicates a
paradox of play. These rules become imaginings of future desires. Vygotsky elaborates,
“Ordinarily a child experiences subordination to rules in the renunciation of something he
wants, but here subordination to a rule and renunciation of action on immediate impulse
are the means to maximum pleasure (1978, p. 99). Playful subversion potentially yields
pleasure.

From a Piagetian perspective, symbolic play is an assimilative activity that
dominates accommodation. In an effort to achieve equilibrium, play becomes the re-
actualization of learning through an imperceptible assimilation of objects to activity.
Accommodation of activity to objects, according to Piaget (1962) requires reason. In such
play a child “transform[s] reality in its own manner without submitting that
transformation to the criterion of objective fact” (Piaget, 1971, p. 338). That assimilative
transformation is subjective. Piaget (1962) proposes a series of six successive
developmental stages of play as a child cognitively shifts from sensorimotor to symbolic
representational activity. Since the first two stages of play correspond to the cognitive
development of infants and babies, which is outside the scope of this research, they have
been omitted. The next three stages signify, perhaps, a shift from being-perceptible to
becoming-imperceptible to re-actualization. The third stage evidences “objects
manipulated with increasing deliberation, the ‘pleasure of being the cause’ … is added to
the mere ‘functional pleasure’” (p. 91). Manipulations of picturebooks without concern
for book-handling conventions might evoke pleasure. In the fourth stage, Piaget notes,
“All that is needed for the ludic ritual to become a symbol is that the child, instead of
merely following the cycle of his habitual movements, should be aware of the make
believe” (p. 93-4). In this stage, virtual and actual co-exist. Possibilities are imagined.
During the fifth stage, re-actualization occurs. Piaget proposes,
In relation to the “tertiary circular reactions” or “experiments in order to see the result,” it often happens that by chance, the child combines unrelated gestures without really trying to experiment, and subsequently repeats these gestures as a ritual and a motor game of them. But in contrast to the combinations of stage IV, which are borrowed from the adapted schemas, these combinations are new and almost immediately have the character of play. (1962, p. 94)

Symbolic play is an expression of creative meaning potentials. It is worth noting that critical shortcomings of Piaget’s theory of cognitive development concern his overriding structuralist belief in universal application of staging, methodology of data collection, and failure to consider the social context of these adaptive processes.

Vygotsky’s teleology of play is neither the acquisition and regurgitation of culturally-defined knowledge nor demonstration of objective mastery, experience or developmental stage (Nilsson & Ferholt, 2014). Instead, exploratory, hands-on approaches to play suit creative acts of imaginative discovery that yield more than new insights (Bruner, 1961). Like a rhizome, each insight is an endpoint that becomes a starting point for a newly constructed reality that begs further exploration. Predicated upon a semblance of knowledge about constructed “truths” or “realities” in the world and an innate curiosity for rethinking them, disruptive transformations emerge from sparks of creativity. Discoveries are ever-expanding re-actualizations of possibility. Bruner contributes the notion of learning through acts of discovery in order to rearrange and transform what is learned “in such a way that one is enabled to go beyond the evidence so reassembled to additional new insights” to the foundation of constructive learning theory that Piaget has established (p. 22). Not restricting his definition of “discovery” to “the act
of finding out something that before was unknown to mankind, but rather [inclusive of] all forms of obtaining knowledge for oneself by the use of one’s own mind” (Ibid.), in the context of this learning, Bruner advocates for discovery as that leads to problem-solving.

In a critical analysis of twenty play-literacy studies published between 1992 and 2000, Roskos and Christie (2001) note, “Vygotsky’s explanatory influence appears limited to the symbolic connection between play and literacy and to social interaction” and “minimal attention is paid to play as a ‘zone of proximal development’ in and of itself, or to the material culture as a mediator of literacy knowledge and practice in the play environment” (p. 72). This comment indicates a window of opportunity to make inquiries into *metapicturebooks* as cultural mediators between the literacy-play relationship with the elementary-aged child reader. Sipe (2008) mentions the lack of grounded theory that intersects “literacy play” development and young children’s “aesthetic impulse” in response to picture books. He proposes,

> When they discussed literature during storybook read alouds, the children were engaged in a pleasurable and sophisticated form of linguistic play, and their imaginations were highly engaged. Performative and transparent responses were perhaps the most obvious indication of this linguistic play; however, all the forms of response were evidence of deep engagement and children’s delighted participation in what they evidently regarded as pleasurable game. Analysis could therefore profitably be framed with theories of play (Fox, 2003; Kantor & Fernie, 2003; Rowe, 1998; Scarlett, 2005; Winnicott, 1974). (Sipe, 2008, p. 239)

Sipe’s brief pondering encouraged my design of The Picturebook Project as well as conceptual considerations of play theories. All transactional reading experiences that
occurred during sessions of The Picturebook Project, whether characterized as play, problem-solving, and/or creativity, are viewed through a framework of social constructivism. These visible evocations of aesthetic responses are constructed from intra-active relations between child readers and the environment, that is the social context and cultural tools as mediators of these transactions.
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

By no means is the following literature review exhaustive nor systematic; rather it reflects a purposive sample of prior research studies to delimit the research problem, seek new lines of inquiry, avoid fruitless approaches, gain methodological insights, and identify recommendations to further existing research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Sources for this literature review were accessed through ERIC, as well as Pennsylvania State University library catalogues, and online search engines. They were reviewed throughout all phases of this research process and draw from a wide variety of scholarly materials, including professional journal articles, peer-reviewed books and chapters of edited collections, dissertations, and conference paper presentations. A preliminary survey of Boolean search terms included either “picturebook” or “picture book,” for scholars’ spelling preferences of the latter term vary, and “reader response.”

With a few exceptions, for the past forty years or so, numerous studies have reported on the verbal and written responses of children to picturebooks. Though invaluable in understanding how words and pictures interact and in appreciating aesthetic elements, a majority of critical approaches to picturebooks have focused more on the what the text and illustrations might mean than what child readers actually understand them to mean during transactional reading experiences. For example, Jordan (1992) wonders why a small sample of competent and independent “older” readers aged 8 and 9 years choose to revisit familiar picturebooks (p. 115). In her close looking she determines that among their favored picturebooks, Anthony Browne’s *Bear Hunt, Bear Goes to
Town and Through the Magic Mirror, are sophisticated instances of empowerment, narrative invitations for the reader “to collude with the author” (p. 122). Drawing heavily on Meek (1988), Jordan emphasizes the range of possible perspectives from which a story may be told and the ensuing lessons an older reader may glean in discerning whose narrative voice. Yet Jordan’s conclusion that picturebooks can be demanding texts for older readers relies more on her scholarly analysis of the word and picture relationship than their actual responses.

Studies that err on the side of speculating how an implied child reader may respond to literary, artistic, or other critical elements of picturebooks, though well-informed and intentioned at the time of the study, hadn’t yet ventured to explore the idiosyncrasies of real reading experiences. They have been generally omitted from this literature review. Although this review is open to studies occurring in a variety of contexts, i.e., out-of-school or home, classroom or educational settings, the latter tends to dominate. Actual child readers’ experiences with picturebooks, not researchers, literacy coaches, or elementary teachers, remains at the heart of this literature review. Even though Mackey (2003) acknowledges, “[h]ow the text is vivified in the privacy of an individual mind is a process very difficult to intercept from the outside,” there have been promising glimpses (p. 113). In the next three sections that embody the core of this literature review, I synthesize major findings about children’s multimodal responses to picturebooks while indicating areas of future research that inform The Picturebook Project. The first explores two trailblazing studies that report on overlapping taxonomies of children’s verbal responses to picturebooks. The second focuses on studies informed
by how children read specific picturebook titles. The third appraises studies that report on
children’s nonlinguistic responses to picturebooks.

**Taxonomies of Child Readers’ Verbal Responses to Picturebooks**

Since the 1990s, there has been an increased focus on research about actual
children’s responses to picturebooks. Leading the way is Kiefer’s (1995) book *The
Potential of Picture Books: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding*. As a
participant observer in elementary schools, Kiefer went beyond children’s stylistic or
artistic preferences to explore what was possible during their transactions with
picturebooks. She observed first and second graders for 10 to 12 week increments over
two years at a suburban Ohio elementary school, noted their behaviors and comments
during read-aloud sessions with trade books in her fieldnotes as well as conducted and
recorded interviews. She asked them “to show me how they liked to look at a new
picturebook and to talk about each book as they looked through it” (p. 17). Their
conversations centered on different illustrated versions of the same Grimm’s fairy tales in
which Kiefer inquired, “What are you thinking about as you look at these pictures?”

After identifying several initial themes to describe children’s responses to picturebooks,
she further refined them upon observation of other grade levels at the same school and in
a preschool and urban second grade classroom in Houston, Texas.

Basing her resulting descriptive framework for the children’s responses on M. A.
K. Halliday’s influential works on the function of spoken language, Kiefer (1995)
proposed four categories of children’s verbal responses as follows. In *informative*
responses children pointed out contents of illustrations, art styles, or pictured events, especially in connection to the real world or other books. In heuristic responses children problem-solved, speculated, or made inferences about narrative events or illustrations. In imaginative responses children participated in the imaginary story world as a book character or onlooker or created figurative language to describe it. Lastly, in personal responses children expressed their own feelings, or opinions while evaluating, comparing and relating it their individual experiences.

Aside from her systematic description of the verbal data, Kiefer (1995) also noted the importance of teachers’ enthusiasm about picturebooks to inspire and invite young readers to respond to picturebooks. To Kiefer, provision of time and materials to craft “written, artistic, dramatic, and musical” responses varied across all observed settings. Some teachers preferred author or illustrator studies, collaborations with art teachers, comparison charts, or open-ended materials. The teacher’s role in prompting talk and availing materials helps to shape children’s construction and negotiation of meaning in picturebooks. She asserts that a naturalistic approach to children’s transactional reading experiences is preferable; she explains,

I believe that the chance to respond to books in different ways is important to deepening children’s responses to books. Although some would argue that responses other than discussion are not authentic and have no place in child-centered classrooms, I have found that it is natural for children and adults to choose many diverse ways to return to the book to know it more deeply. (Kiefer, 1995, p. 64)
Placing arbitrary limitations on types and manner of responses deemed acceptable in a classroom overlooks the spectrum of “diverse ways” children may engage with a picturebook.

Appreciative of teachers’ influential roles in availing particular picturebooks and facilitating certain literary understandings, Sipe (2008) articulates a grounded theoretical model of how young children make sense of picturebooks too. In *Storytime: Young Children’s Literary Understanding in the Classroom*, he coheres five complementary studies undertaken in urban and suburban Kindergarten, first-, and second-grade classrooms to offer a typology of ethnically, racially and socioeconomically diverse student’s oral responses to read-alouds and related discussions about picturebooks of various fictional genres. The “high-quality” picturebooks included in these studies have been “defined by their mention in standard texts of children’s literature, public recognition in the form of medals and awards and favorable reviews” (Sipe, 2008, p. 242). Situating his studies within a Vygotskyian social constructivist framework contemplative of a continuum of reader response theories (p. 9), Sipe analyzes audio recorded transcripts to offer five conceptual categories of their verbal meaning-making responses. Kinds of responses and percentages comprising conversational turns in the coded data are as follows: analytical-73%; intertextual-10%; personal-10%; transparent-2%; and performative-5% (p. 89-90). His in-depth descriptions of the preponderant analytical stance primarily revolve around identifying, evaluating, inferring, or speculating about traditional narrative elements such as setting, plot, characters, and theme found within the verbal and visual text, including the peritext (p. 90). As discussed in chapter one, such interpretations are par for course given CCSS’ emphasis on
interpretations to be evidenced within the “four corners of the text” when reading fictional literature.

One of Sipe’s sub-categories of analytical stances that considers the picturebook as both object of design created by an author and illustrator and cultural product has relevance to this literature review. In a seven-month study of twenty-seven first and second graders that partially informed his grounded theory, Sipe details students’ mention of metalanguage for talking about visual aspects of picturebook design and production. In conversation, they attended to illustration media, artistic style, perspective, and endpages. Sipe (1998) postulates, “children learn the language of picturebooks best when terms and concepts are presented in meaningful contexts, as the occasion arises during storybook reading sessions or literature discussions” (p. 68). In organic conversations about picturebooks, those that are student-driven and not teacher-directed, authentic opportunities to present such metalanguage may arise. Though conceivably beneficial in a young reader’s construction and negotiation of meaning, gaining familiarity with metalanguage about picturebooks isn’t a likely priority in most elementary classrooms, that is, if reading instruction strictly adheres to CCSS. As pointed out in chapter one, few ELA standards mention illustrations. Verbal text carries greater interpretive weight. Along these lines, in her foreword to Evans’ edited collection What’s in the Picture? Responding to Illustrations in Picture books, Goodman (1998) remarks, 

Often, however, little is done in classrooms or in teacher education programs to raise the intuitive responses of readers to conscious awareness in order to enhance their multiple ways of knowing by engaging the
artwork in a text in the construction of knowledge and understandings. (p. xi)

Any valuing of non-analytic reader responses, especially those that ponder picturebook’s design in relation to the fictional narrative becomes curtailed on account of standardized curriculum and related state-mandated assessments that favor multiple choice responses to single-page reading passages that may offer a decorative illustration.

Although Sipe’s (2008) latter two categories of young children’s responses to picturebooks—transparent and performative responses—are less common, he maintains, “quantity is not indicative of quality; these two types of responses represent some of the most interesting and provocative data” (p. 169). Herein lies what he calls the “aesthetic impulse,” a creative manifestation of both private and, most significantly, public expression. He states, “At the core of the aesthetic impulse is the desire to forget our own contingency and experience the freedom art provides” (p. 191). His “aesthetic impulse” is akin to Kiefer’s (1995) imaginative responses. In the more receptive transparent responses, according to Sipe (2008) child merges with “the narrative world of the story” to “become one with it” (p. 86). Children “may (1) express spontaneous emotion as evidence of their deep engagement in the story; (2) talk back to the story characters, warning, evaluating, or cheering them on; or (3) assume the role of storybook characters, speaking in role as the characters” (p. 183). In contrast performative responses to a picturebook become a catalyst for a reader’s outward expressions. Sipe argues that children enter into the fictional world “to manipulate or steer it towards their own purposes” (2008b, p. 86). The text functions as a “platform” for creativity and playfulness

Few details contextualize transcript excerpts that evidence Sipe’s (2008) proffered typologies as generalities likely pose greater value to his audience of teacher-readers and practitioners. Only book title and perhaps, fleeting mention of dialogue immediately preceding the conversation are provided. And so, I wonder, for example, if a young child just departed from a guided reading group lesson in which making text-to-text connections had been the instructional focus prior to the read aloud, might a picturebook discussion be swayed to foreground intertextuality in their verbal responses to a picturebook? Such a pondering raises a more significant question about the kinds or manner of student responses and selections of picturebooks beyond being deemed “high-quality” that each of these classroom teachers explicitly or implicitly privileged at that time. An amalgamation of the sociocultural context, influence of teacher and curricular preferences, choice of available materials, peer influence, and managed classroom environment may encourage or dissuade young children to respond to picturebooks in particular ways. In many of these invaluable reading response studies, data had been restricted to only certain reader responses as defined by each researcher. The Picturebook Project welcomes all possible responses.

Although book talks with elementary-aged children have become the cornerstone of creating literate classroom communities (Short, 1990; Daniels, 1994; Chambers, 1985; 1996; Beck & McKeown, 2001), by limiting collected data to audio recordings or written responses in their respective studies Kiefer (1995) and Sipe (2008) overlooked other informal communicative dimensions that might have co-occurred with student’s verbal
expressions. Such omissions push to the periphery any nonverbal, gestural or other multimodal expressions that may have also been indicative of and function as meaning-making responses that vivify a picturebook. Continuing to focus on verbal language in The Picturebook Project would further reify CCSS’s keystone of printed word as the primary carrier of meaning as well as neglect those researchers’ strides to re-think literacies and reader response that have happened in the years since these groundbreaking studies. Delimiting children’s responses to just spoken word fails to notice other multimodal aesthetic interpretations that potentially deepen our understanding of a young child’s transactional reading experiences with picturebooks.

**Child Readers’ Responses to Preselected Picturebooks**

Some picturebooks make unique demands on readers. Several studies attempt to better understand how certain picturebooks’ multimodal content invite child readers to transact in certain ways. For example, to account for how children across seven geographically and socioeconomically diverse British primary school settings make sense of the interrelationship between words and pictures, Arizpe & Styles (2003) as principal investigators designed a study to identify children’s verbal and visual perceptions about illustrations in preselected picturebooks by well-known artists, Anthony Browne’s *Zoo* and *The Tunnel* and Satoshi Kitamura’s *Lily Takes a Walk*. Along with three other researchers, they initially conducted semi-structured interviews with eighty-four children aged 4 to 11 years. Approximately one-third of these children were “bilingual with varied linguistic backgrounds” (p. 7). The initial child participants were invited to draw a picture
in response to the picturebook under review (p. 3-4). After each interview, these children partook in group discussions with classmates about the respective picturebooks. Follow-up interviews with a quarter of those students also included a second drawing. Additional data included a short questionnaire about students’ reading and visual media habits. That data provided general insights that subtly discern students’ collective literacy backgrounds from each of the schools in the study, such as exposure to picturebooks outside of school, access to electronic devices, and preferences for certain texts. Their inductive coding that borrowed from Kiefer (1993) and Madura’s (1998) systematic studies on reader response to picturebooks grouped oral responses as either “categories of perception” that note inter- and intra-textual connections between words and pictures or “levels of interpretation” regarding picturebook codes (p. 6).

Arizpe and Styles (2003) pose a series of “how” research questions—“how do young readers learn how picturebooks work? How do they join the artist's game? How do they make sense of the discourse of the pictures? How do they relate it to the words? And how do they deal with the incoherent and the incomplete?” (p. 57). To address these broad-sweeping questions, Arizpe and Styles use a selective sampling of picturebooks. Although they extensively detail their findings through a presentation of sequential summaries of each picturebook’s many conversations by highlighting excerpts from their transcripts, Lewis’ (2004) review of their book characterizes their guiding questions as “not helpful” (p. 65). He criticizes, “the children's responses are at just too low a level to give the authors anything to ‘bite’ on” (p. 65) for the majority of their chapters that present findings reinforce existing picturebook theory about “interdependence of words and pictures” or intertextuality and lack a “willingness to speculate and interpret” (p. 66).
A closer look at their book’s Appendix 6’s “Codes for data analysis,” specifically those pertaining to levels of interpretation, Arizpe and Styles pass judgement on children’s responses in determining plausible or implausible explanations rather than welcoming all meaning potentials (Halliday, 1978). Their coding labels include “mis-readings (wrong)” and “implausible/imaginative explanation not supported by either text or illustrations” (Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 258). This coding ratifies fixed meanings.

Circling back to their research objective—to “investigate how visual texts are read by children using the work of well-known picturebook artists”—I wonder how those interpretations deemed “implausible” came into being (p. 1). Description of featured participants situatedness in varying schools and, quite possibly sociocultural contexts have also been omitted. Numeric age, pseudonym, and title of picturebook remain the three consistent pieces of contextual information provided alongside transcript excerpts or images of drawings. Neither the child’s situatedness in an “interpretive community,” prior knowledge, nor perceived aspects of the visual and verbal interplay that prompted such a reader response are fully known. In their post-script chapter, Arizpe and Styles (2003) remarked on the open-ended nature of their methodology that allowed for flexibility in the direction of interview questions and discussions about the chosen picturebooks. Just as they reflected on positive teacher expectations, I wonder how this carries over to prospective researcher’s expectations about the nature of child reader’s responses. Despite intent listening, this reader response study missed an opportunity to dig deeper into children’s interpretive processes that go beyond the immediate perception words and pictures to account for all manner of their transactional responses occurring in a social context.
Deliberate attention to particular picturebook features may spur meaning-making responses in which meta-awareness deepens young readers’ understandings. For instance, Pantaleo (2009), as both researcher and teacher, worked with classrooms of eight- to ten-year old students for 80 minutes each school morning for nine weeks to better understand elementary-aged student’s reading processes and experiences with postmodern picturebooks. During that time, she discussed with the students “the notion of ‘response’” and modeled “the qualities of a ‘good’ aesthetic response” (p. 50). Introducing postmodern picturebooks of increasing complexity from Browne’s (1997) *Willy the Dreamer* to Child’s (2000; 2002) *Beware of Storybook Wolves* and *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Book?*, each student initially read the first title independently, completed a written response, and then participated in audio-recorded small group discussions. Afterwards, Pantaleo explicitly taught the types of metafictive devices (e.g., intertextuality, pastiche of illustrative styles, parodic appropriations, new and/or unusual layout or design, typographic experimentation, and mise-en-abyme) found in postmodern picturebooks during whole-group activities. Though the content and selected picturebooks may vary, these three reading experiences mirror those instructional formats occurring in countless other elementary classrooms. Her data analysis of children’s written responses about their reading experiences indicated not only the most frequently referenced metafictive devices that contributed to their pleasure and enjoyment, but also the manner of discourse and metalanguage they had acquired to prize postmodern picturebooks in this controlled environment.

As reported in Pantaleo’s study, children’s responses were limited to reflective verbal or written responses that met a certain “communal understanding of the
expectations, etiquette and protocol of ‘successful’ discussions” (2009, p. 50). Even though Pantaleo characterizes these responses as aesthetic reading experiences, I wonder, generally, if predefined parameters of what constitutes “good” reader response, precludes certain ways of thinking about a picturebook that would’ve otherwise been emerged without them. Did those students have the freedom to spontaneously erupt in raucous laughter or disrupt classroom decorum at the beholding of these picturebooks’ playful absurdities? Or had reading of these picturebooks and subsequent written responses to them become prescribed activity? Pantaleo’s constraints, posed as some “diverse ways” of responding, may or may not have discouraged certain responses through privileging others within those classrooms’ interpretive communities. Absent further specificity of those parameters, the potential sway of the classroom’s interpretive community on the students’ transactional reading experiences is uncertain.

**Nonlinguistic Ways Child Readers Respond to Picturebooks**

A multimodal perspective acknowledges some representative ways from which to construct meaning within any given “semiotic landscape” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15). By attending to the materiality, design, and production of their constructed responses as artifacts or cultural tools that mediate thinking, multimodality ponders the many ways in which children respond to picturebooks in various social contexts. Narrowed only by the particular interpretive community to which a child reader belongs, there potentially exist “limitless” meaning-making possibilities (Bader, 1976, p.1). To
broaden the preceding section’s limited emphasis on verbal responses, I review studies that highlight nonlinguistic responses to picturebooks too.

**Dramatic Responses**

Several studies that aim to interpret children’s interactions with picturebooks’ multimodalities report on children’s literacy practices in the twenty-first century. Rich commentary about their play, drama, writing, collaborative discussion and reading development capture their interpretations in the context of reading growth and self-awareness within school and home environments. In a study of five-second graders’ literary understandings of picturebook read alouds through performative responses, Adomat (2010) finds some children have a greater propensity for such responses in their peer-to-peer conversations. Modalities contributing to their literary understanding within these small-group sessions include gesture, mime, vocal intonations, characterizations, sound effects and impromptu dramatizations. According to Adomat, teachers often deem these impromptu responses as “disruptive” and characterize the children responding in such a manner to be “off-task” because these responses diverge from analytical responses that address literary elements (p. 218).

To some child readers, lived experiences that evoke play and performance are part and parcel of their co-construction of meaning. Adomat argues that performative responses shift agency to a particular struggling second grade reader in her immersion and dramatic entry into the story world, establishment of mood, and character role-playing. Associated with young children’s book-related dramatic play to engage in
meaning making, this active construction of meaning affirms narrative understanding. Despite rich findings that document the nature of performative response within a classroom context, the choice of picturebooks had been fluid. Adomat explains, “Stories were chosen for read-alouds because the student requested the books, or the teacher thought they would appeal to the children’s interests or would tie in with topics across the curriculum” (p. 212). None of the named picturebook titles in Adomat’s study had been purposefully selected on account of metafictive devices like breaking the so-called fourth wall to directly address the reader or self-reflexivity that calls attention to the book as designed object in a child’s hands. Student choice of the picturebooks available in the classrooms had been the sole guide. The multimodal manifestation of an aesthetic impulse given the opportunity for young children to respond to picturebooks with metafictive features hasn’t yet been studied.

**Drawn Responses**

In her chapter that analyzes children’s drawings in response to the picturebooks from Arizpe & Styles’ research study, namely her class of 4- and 5-year-olds to Browne’s *Zoo*, Rabey (2003) asserts, “A visual experience demands a visual response true to its original form” (p. 118). She continues, “children were given the opportunity to look at and discuss the illustrations and text in great detail and make their own ‘zoo’ stories through play and art and craft” (Ibid.) Rabey initially examines three increasingly sophisticated levels of response—literal understanding, overall effect, and internal structure—to compare the development differences between her students’ drawings and
that of “one exceptional class of 10-year-olds. In this study, literal understanding communicated the picturebook’s narrative about a family visiting a zoo. Younger children composed drawings that featured both animals and humans occupying equal space.

Arizpe and Styles note how Browne’s pictorial style of near photographic realism influences the overall interpretive effect and children’s attentiveness to aesthetic qualities in unique ways across the two groups. Younger children’s boldness of space, scribbled line and color choices “were generally freer and less inhibited” as compared to the older students’ capturing of Browne’s stylistic qualities. The latter’s experimentation with pencil strokes indicated a sense of containment. An examination of internal structures examines the drawing’s “composition for balance and the relationship between objects or characters and their relative scale” (Rabey, 2003, p. 118), namely students’ experimentation with viewpoints. For example, an 8-year-old child Christina arranged the internal elements grass and butterfly to deliberately distinguish between the caged tiger and outside world in a manner that experiments with Browne’s detailed attention to the minutiae of the world. Though middle childhood, generally defined as ages 8-11 years, marks a “move away from an emotional and aesthetic response towards a greater interest in the internal structure of the composition” (p. 127), Rabey asserts that this developmental stage doesn’t “herald the end of aesthetic artistic responses” so long as these children have “opportunities to continue to explore, accept and understand the uniquely expressive qualities of art and other forms of aesthetic communication” (p. 129). In her poignant conclusion, “by doing we come to understand” (p. 138), Rabey asserts that creative experimentation when paired with a teacher’s explicit focus on the overall
effect of the visual design elements (composition, line, form, color) helps children from Kindergarten to 5th grade gain sophisticated understandings about visual metalanguage. Being open to the many nonlinguistic ways that children respond to picturebooks potentially enhances their aesthetic appreciation and might deepen their literary understanding.

**Tactile Responses**

Offering insights about reading as a more physical and tactile activity “than we often credit,” Mackey (2003) designed a study that draws attention to non-verbal performative and playful actions during collaborative reading. She reported on pairs of older elementary-aged students’ responses to David Macaulay’s (1995) *Shortcut*, a postmodern picturebook. Both over-the-shoulder video recordings aimed at the open picturebook and transcripts of the pupils’ audio recorded conversational readings indicated their coordinated expressions and gestures of interpretation, negotiation, and orchestration. She highlights the tactile interactions between physical text and their hands and bodies in addition to their “voices and wits” (p. 113). To Mackey, this shared reading is a reciprocal, hands-on experience, even more visible than silent reading in which a child self-sustains his or her attention in reading a picturebook. Her regard for child readers widens understanding of the conceivable functions of a picturebook as an aesthetic object. By observing actual child readers’ transactional reading experiences, possible actions related to tactile design considerations that invite particular ways of book handling may be discovered.
Minimal scholarship considers actual children’s transactions with those picturebooks that embody dual publishing trends of the past decade. An earlier pilot case study of mine that considered the idiosyncratic nature of a preschooler’s tactile responses to *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* in digital and print formats indicates the possibility of expressive pleasure and exploratory play (Hudock, 2017). The title of *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* declares a past misuse to an unseen audience, for it demands the reader’s attention to the personified book’s undertaking. It invites hands-on play upon discovery of its unconventional layout and boundary breaking narrative. The participating preschooler exhibited multimodal and tactile expressions of playful delight during a shared reading in his home of this *metapicturebook*. More exacting research is necessary to make visible a child reader’s interpretive processes. A multimodal perspective has the potential to appreciate the aesthetic reading transaction dynamic amalgamation of cognitive, emotional, imaginative, playful, and creative meaning potentials.

In this literature review a slice of existing research studies that analyze children’s responses to picturebooks were considered, such as those conducted in natural classroom settings or in researcher-directed small group discussions in schools. Verbal responses have been the primary focus in both taxonomical studies and those examining interpretive processes underway to reach understandings of certain picturebook titles deemed “correct” or acceptable by researchers and/or teachers. Even fewer studies attend to children’s nonlinguistic responses to picturebooks. With the goal of contributing to the body of literature on this topic by way of addressing the research question, The Picturebook Project diverges from these studies in its bricolage of methodological approaches that converge on my conceptual framework.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“Well . . .” Jonas had to stop and think it through. “If everything’s the same, then there aren’t any choices! I want to wake up every morning and decide things! A blue tunic or a red one?”

He looked down at himself, at the colorless fabric of his clothing. “But it’s the same, always.”

Then he laughed a little. “I know it’s not important, what you wear. It doesn’t matter. But—”

“It’s the choosing that’s important, isn’t it?” The Giver asked him.


In this chapter, I begin with a rationale for methodologically orienting The Picturebook Project as a bricolage of qualitative research design. Initial adoption of this bricolage approach had been as a corollary of my resourcefulness in cobbling together procedural methods and material resources fitting of my stated research objective, time constraints, and those circumstances unique to the proposed research site and prospective participants. At present, this bricolage also embodies a shift in my thinking as a nascent researcher to pushback against rigid adherence to methodological procedures that contradict the freedoms that creative meaning potentials afford. And so, by design, The Picturebook Project is first and foremost an ethnographically informed case study. Chapter six will focus on how microethnography informed data analysis too. Step by step, this chapter clarifies how I arrived at this hodgepodge of abridged methodological descriptors—micro/ethnographically informed case study. Next, I provide a brief sketch
of my background in teaching first grade at Title I elementary schools and multiple roles in this study accounts for any obvious and latent biases. Then, I describe methods for recruitment and selection of research site and participants, outline the data necessary to collect in order to address the research question, and detail the research design, data collection methods, and approach to data analysis. In the last section of this chapter, I consider the ethics, trustworthiness and design limitations of The Picturebook Project.

**Rationale for Bricolage Approach**

Navigating qualitative research design is a potentially labyrinthine process. From the outset my goal has been to glean a more emic understanding, an insider’s perspective about the situated participants and cultural tools being studied. Given a particular assemblage of qualitative data collection procedures and methods of analysis, this study, in turn, avails rich descriptions of the environment and participants’ transactions that contribute to scholarly literature as well as lead to additional research questions for future investigation. For me, designing this qualitative research study has been metaphorically comparable to the commencement of the third and final task of the Triwizard Tournament. Just as Harry Potter encountered the Quidditch field that had been transformed into a “vast maze” at the end of Rowling’s (2000) *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (p. 620), I am confronted with the task of “navigating through the myriad constructs of research processes” (Zipf, 2016, p. 59). Rowling describes the magnitude of the solitary task that befalls the Triwizard champions that include Harry Potter:
Towering hedges cast black shadows across the path, and whether they were so tall and thick or because they had been enchanted, the sound of the surrounding crowd was silenced the moment they entered the maze. (p. 621)

These hedges represent the paradigmatic dimensions of various qualitative orientations through which I may choose to traverse in order to reach my interpretive destination for time being. But no deterministic pathway transects this “methodological maze” on entry or exit (Zipf, 2016). Negotiating passageway entrusts the most suited of the available methodological orientations from the outset and demands adaptability to “unanticipated events” (Yin, 2014, p. 74).

The Picturebook Project adopts a bricolage approach by drawing on two principal qualitative methodological perspectives. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2018), a “research-as-bricoleur theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms” (p. 11). First, case studies aim to develop an extensive understanding of a particular event, situation, program, or activity of a particular setting. The choice of what to investigate ranges from an intensive analysis and description of a concrete unit of study—an individual, small group, or social organization—to an abstract one—a community, relationship, or meaning-making process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). Second, ethnographic studies examine a cultural-sharing group to describe and interpret shared and learned patterns of values, beliefs, and attitudes that shape the meaning of those behaviors, communicative language, and social interactions that participants often take for granted (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).
Researcher-as-Bricoleur

The etymological foundation for this bricolage approach derives from French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. As a point of departure from the theoretical “science of the concrete” to essentialize the structures that govern meaning-making, he proposes the notion of “intellectual bricolage” as an analogy that disrupts the binary between what has become quantitative and qualitative research (1962, p. 11). On the one hand is an engineer’s subordination to “availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project” (p. 11). But bricoleurs, writes Lévi-Strauss, “make do with ‘whatever is at hand’” (p. 11). In The Picturebook Project, I have preselected materials to bring to the research site and crafted surveys and questions but remain open to other available means within the environment to further my study’s knowledge-production (Rogers, 2012). Influencing qualitative research in spirit, bricolage appreciates more than strict adherence to procedural processes. It allows for a critical consciousness that, according to Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg & Monzó, (2017), “refuses the passive acceptance of externally imposed research methods that tacitly certify modes justifying knowledges that are decontextualized, reductionistic, and inscribed by dominant modes of power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Foster, 1997; Kinchloe & Berry, 2004; McLeod, 2000)” (p. 246). A researcher-as-bricoleur relies on imagination and resourcefulness in relation to “whatever is at hand” like cultural tools and available material artifacts within a given social context (Crotty, 1998; Rogers, 2012). A bricoleur’s versatility invites reinterpretation as meaning-making of multiple realities and presents a suitable methodological approach to this qualitative research design.
To clarify the versatility required of me as a qualitative researcher embracing a bricolage approach, I return to my literary metaphor. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the ever-changing landscape of shifting hedges in the “vast maze” constructs a web of shifting reality. Each Triwizard champion’s understanding of that maze is relative to his or her vantage point at any given point in time. Likewise, ontological and epistemological complexities of this qualitative study favor relativism and subjectivity, respectively. Presuppositions of constructivism generate boundless contemplations to questions like, “What is the nature of reality?” Such knowledge-production is specific to the individual or culture-sharing group, and context of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 37). Distinguishable from “anything goes” relativism, bricolage facilitates “a generously rigorous, informed multiperspectival way of exploring the lived world” (Kinchloe & Berry, 2004, p. 9). Using “whatever is at hand,” this approach frames social phenomena to bear its relative context and make visible cultural assumptions. Of importance to these constructive interpretations is the acknowledgement “that social structures do not determine individual subjectivity, but constrain it in remarkably intricate ways” (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg & Monzó, 2017, p. 249). Learned conventions informed by certain expectations gleaned from a social context inhibit an individual’s production of alternative possibilities.

Returning to the metaphor, while shrouded in darkness or engulfed by mist, these Triwizard champions continually evaluate their immediate and unique situational reality while trapped within the maze. Their non-Muggle membership to a social group of under-age wizarding students limit their subjective undertaking. Despite an incantation of “Lumos” to shine a wand ahead, the narrator explains, “there was nothing in sight”
(Rowling, 2000, p. 621-2). Though low visibility constrains them, it fails to control their actions. Each twist and turn of the maze necessitates their wands to be “at the ready.” Despite their instincts and intelligences, they cannot anticipate every approaching obstacle, nor how to respond. Instead, they must improvise in-the-moment. Typified by trial and error that relies upon their prior experiences casting spells, such as the conjuring of a protective patronus upon sight of a dementor, sometimes their attempts result in failure. Without such risk-taking or innovation their progress through the “vast maze” would cease. After continued observation and realization that this shape-shifting dementor more closely resembles a boggart, a shout of “Riddikulus” instantly resolved the problem using “whatever is at hand.” Analogous to this adaptable spell-making, The Picturebook Project relies on a bricolage of research methods as needed in the unfolding context of research.

For Wickens (2011), a multi-methodological researcher-as-bricoleur, an eclectic assemblage of a multifaceted framework, including “constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967), discursive textual analysis (Fairclough 2003), and traditional literary analysis (Vandergrift 1990),” examines complex constructions of power networks, identity construction, and authorial message in seventeen LGBTQ-themed young adult novels (p. 151). Transparency through precise description of her novel interpretive process begets rigor and indicates her reflexivity. Wickens’ methodological bricolage yielded a “deep, rich, yet fluid analysis of and critical interpretive connections” between data representations (p. 159). Her triple-entry journals embody emergent research design that further those chosen analyses. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) explain, "if a researcher needs to invent, or piece together new tools or techniques, he or she will
do so” (p. 4). And so, I utilize available “aesthetic and material tools” to develop those practices, strategies, and data collection methods that query elementary-aged children’s transactions with metapicturebooks (p. 4). The following section furthers my discussion of the previously mentioned qualitative approaches. One potentially informs and critiques the other and vice versa, so as to construct an interpretive understanding of this complex social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

**Borrowing from Qualitative Case Studies**

Like the Triwizard Cup, a portkey that transports to places unknown, my weighing of axiomatic differences invariably guides me to my entry point into this “methodological maze,” single-case study design. This investigation of child readers’ dynamic responses to metapicturebooks within a particular environment lends to single-case study research design. Case studies aim to describe and interpret a social phenomenon occurring in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Instead of characterizing case study as a method, Stake (1995) regards it as a bounded unit of study. According to Merriam (1998), the case is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can ‘fence in’ what I am going to study” (p. 27). The Picturebook Project’s bounded unit of analysis delineates the social phenomenon or intervention to be examined, single research site from which to collect data, the three types of study participants, and selected cultural tools and materials within the particular environment. Several factors contributed to The Picturebook Project’s temporal boundedness: (1) duration of the Community Center’s two-month Summer Care Program from the end of
the former school year to the start of the next one; (2) morning availability of semi-private space within the Community Center to house the sessions so as to protect the child participant’s identities; and (3) availability of Principal Investigator due to two summer conference paper presentations.

**Borrowing from Ethnographic Studies**

Though single case study research design may be the backbone of The Picturebook Project on account of its access to knowledge production through participant observation of an intervention, ethnographically informed methods tease out the cultural nuances that suggestively inform this complex social phenomenon. In the next few paragraphs, I review ethnography in order to explain what I mean by “ethnographically informed” in the context of this study and how it informs my bricolage approach. Of note, the manner in which microethnography, sometimes referred to as video ethnography on account of its frame-by-frame analysis of video recordings, informs this study will be elaborated in chapter six. Ethnography, a capricious term originating in anthropology and adopted by Chicago School sociologists for methodological application to urban settings, is generally characterized by the researcher’s first-hand immersion within and among a particular culture-sharing group. Given the boundedness of case study as the unit of analysis, to Merriam (1998) ethnographic studies may be integrated to focalize the culture of a specific social group. Unlike case study’s distillation of the “what” of a social phenomenon, ethnography explores the “why” and “how.” Imbued with varying analytical strands of descriptive interpretation that reconstruct the everyday
happenings of the subject, an ethnographer enters the research site with an open-mind to glean rich, holistic insights. In being able to use “whatever is at hand,” the fluidity of ethnographic research traditions benefitted my responsiveness to the study’s setting as certain needs and obstacles in data collections arose.

Gleaning an in-depth understanding about child participant’s situated reader responses to *metapicturebooks* in a bounded context, this case study, like Perkins’ (2013) qualitative research in music education that explores the constructed nature of the “learning cultures” at a UK conservatoire, is not indebted to the “ethnographical premise of a less-bounded culture-sharing group (Creswell 2005)” (p. 200). Case study is less concerned with the methods employed than its bounded design and what it uniquely reveals about the social phenomenon of transactional reading experiences through intensive, holistic description. When combined with ethnography through bricolage, case study affixes boundedness to the culture-sharing group. And so, ethnographic techniques inform the multiple methods of data collection. Featured in an ethnographer’s toolbox are data sources—fieldnotes, “in-depth interviews, life histories or documents (e.g. texts, photographs, videos and other mediums)” (Reeves, Peller, Goldman & Kitto, 2013, p. e1367). Unlike an extensive classroom ethnography (Bloome, 2012), this case study applies an ethnographically informed approach to child participants’ transactions with picturebooks within a bounded intervention in which aesthetic responses emerge.
Methodological Tensions

Aside from epistemological considerations, my encounters with ethical quandaries, my existing pedagogical beliefs, and my pragmatic responses to unforeseen circumstances that arose in the course of data collection also factored into my rationale for positioning myself as researcher-as-bricoleur. Methodological tensions arose from this strategically-chosen multifaceted and versatile positioning. As facilitator, a role that is akin to that of a teacher minus the answerability to curricular demands, from a research point of view I stepped in front of the cameras. I was directly engaged in unfolding conversations and ponderings that child participants had about their encounters with metapicturebooks and realizations of their aesthetic experiences. I was also responsible for tailoring the day-to-day planning of The Picturebook Project’s ten sessions. My facilitation of the daily sessions required foresight, planning, and drew upon my background as classroom teacher.

On the other hand, my role as participant observer of the Summer Care Program at the Community Center and within those sessions when child participants were engaged in creative flow of ideas and responses to metapicturebooks guided that facilitation. My observations, fieldnotes, and review of recorded data enabled my responsiveness. But striking a seamless balance between these two seemingly diametrically opposed positionalities posed some difficulties. Since I could not take fieldnotes and facilitate sessions simultaneously, anchor charts became the means in which I could note, often verbatim, the child participants verbal responses to picturebooks. With my energies
focused on assisting the child participants when, for example, bottles of glue wouldn’t open or dull scissors wouldn’t cut through felt or other materials, sometimes I wouldn’t realize that a video camera had a “low battery” or its power cord had become unplugged. Multiple cameras and audio recorders set-up around the room helped to fill in the gaps, but the entirety of the first half of the fifth session went unrecorded. Anchor charts and an ex post facto memo helped me to re-construct that session’s proceedings. By the fourth session, the Arts & Craft Room had an overly cluttered countertop. Reluctant to relocate items that belonged to the Community Center, that clutter from inhibited me from setting up my third video camera. So, I used it as a handheld camera and went from child to child to informally ask each participant to talk about his or her book monster. For the benefit of this data collection, I borrowed from not only an ethnographic toolbox, but also used “whatever is at hand” to improvise as need be. Balancing the dynamic tension between participant observer and analytic perspectives typifies ethnographic research (Hammersley, 2006). Hammersley (1985) explains, “The task [of ethnographers] is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to ‘get inside’ the way each group of people sees the world” (p. 152). My emic perspective is framed by my direct facilitation of and participation in those sessions.

For example, about a half hour into the second session as we reached the conclusion of *The Book That Eats People* (Perry, 2009) during a read-aloud, I could sense their restlessness and decided to forgo a book discussion. So, I closed the book and expected to transition into the next activity in which child participants would engage in the construction of book monsters. I explained, “So, what we’re going to do today, we’re going to start art today. And you are going to…” Reaching for *The Book That Eats*
People that I had just placed on the floor beside my chair. Alejandro interjects, “I need to close this.” He adds, “I don’t want to keep open.” Recognizing his blurring of the boundaries between fictional storyworld and his reality, I played along with him instead of proceeding as planned. “Do you want to put it under something heavy? Do you want to stack it up under stuff?” I asked him. He reached for nearby books to place atop *The Book That Eats People*. Tamah joined in by handing us more books. After I ask, “Are we safe now?” to which Alejandro responds in the negative, he crawls a few feet across the floor to grab another book. Now, Dawit approaches the stack of book and places his hand atop the pile while pulling out *The Book That Eats People* and declaring, “It’ll still eat us.” To ensure our safety from any harm that this “carnivorous” book might pose, I opted to put the leg of my chair precariously atop the pile. This fifty-five second deviation is only one example of how my casual observation altered my planned facilitation and how that eventually transitioned into my direct participation in the storyworld alongside child participants. By following Alejandro’s lead instead of fixed plans, I had an aesthetic experience too.

On account of the boundedness of this study, discovery of emic insights in relation to macro-level contexts beyond those sessions were somewhat limited. I entered the Community Center and Summer Care Program as an outsider bringing in this opportunity in which a limited number of elementary-aged children would partake. I intended to glean an understanding of that immediate environment, its current cultural tools and practices related to literacy and sociohistorical considerations that shape them.

---

3 All names of study participants are pseudonyms.
Envisioning the research site as a spiral that expands outward, my positioning of researcher-as-bricoleur varied according to which loop of the setting or social context I was circumnavigating for data collection purposes at the time. See figure 4-1. This fluidity complicated the balance between dualistic etic and emic perspectives. While in the fleeting throes of hands-on engagement with a few child participants as we explored a *metapicturebook*, an emic perspective guided my understanding. At the same time, in glancing across the room, I’d observe other child participants occupied with a task at hand of which the details were unclear to me. Other times in which I observed the child participants playing dodgeball in the gymnasium with fellow Summer Care Program campers before our session commenced, an etic perspective prevailed, that is to say, until the staff encouraged me join the game.

Figure 4-1: Multidirectional & Interconnected Contexts of The Picturebook Project
By enriching the child participants’ experience at the Summer Care Program, by introducing novel metapicturebooks and by making materials and tools available to create, my impact on this “interpretive community” and my influential presence at the research site cannot be divorced from the collected data. It must be fully acknowledged. Moreover, as the study progressed, staff dispensed with my positioning as researcher to look upon me as an insider capable of using “whatever is at hand” to assist them in an exigent circumstance as a volunteer or join in the fun.

To think about validity in qualitative research necessitates a focus on methodological tensions. Absent any procedural means to systematically eliminate or resolve them so as to further objectivity (Norris, 1997), the next section copes with methodological tensions, namely my researcher biases in “consideration [my]self as a researcher and [my]self in relation to the topic of research” as well as that of my whiteness in being a racial other in the study’s sociocultural context (p. 174). Of course, my affinity for metapicturebooks assuredly contributed to my selection of them for the purposes of this study. The same familiarity had bearing on my selection of research participants and site, for I would not choose to study them without a vested interest. Likewise, study design and its corollary of data collected reflect my personal style as facilitator of and, at times, participant in The Picturebook Project. Nonetheless, the following introspection and later-discussed description of member-checking through participant validation of data and analysis aim to enhance this study’s trustworthiness through transparency.
Researcher Reflexivity

Attentiveness to my bricolage of positionalities as researcher, facilitator, participant-observer in The Picturebook Project has required continual reflection to discern my subjectivities throughout all stages of research design, implementation, and analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) remind qualitative researchers like myself to “acknowledge that no matter how much you try you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value” (p. 34). First and foremost, my racial identity as a monolingual White woman differed from the preponderance of child participants, staff, directors, and visitors to the Community Center. Numerous minority ethno-racial groups constituted the primary populations in my study’s sociocultural context. I was a cultural outsider to the Neighborhood too. Nine languages were named in the fourteen collected surveys from visitors to the exhibit. Given my emphasis on environment in my research objective, a colorblind stance would’ve perpetuated racial inequities of an ecopolitical system that espouses “equal opportunity” but wherein Whiteness remains normative. That approach would’ve discounted the experiences of people of color participating in this study as non-normative or deviations. Colorblindness was unacceptable. Throughout this study I had to grapple with my past ignorance about the Neighborhood and Community Center when I had been a nearby teacher. At that time, to appreciate sociocultural differences between myself, my first-graders and their families, I endeavored to gain familiarity about the Islamic faith, geopolitical history of Eritrea and Ethiopia, and dynamics of Sudanese civil
war. With humility and self-awareness of my systemic receipt of White privilege, I engaged with parents and sought out resources to accept the positive image of racial minority, and to step away from any residual notion that racial differences are cultural deficits. Mindful of my Whiteness, I approached my research site and study participants with an open mind to engage in dialogue across these differences too. Through these interactions with and perspectives of study participants, and my reflective field notes I became conscious of my disconnect to this historically African American Neighborhood, for I had only previously concentrated my attention on the student population of immigrants. Motivated to further confront my privilege, I actively communicated my valuing of and interest in better understanding their individual and collective life experiences as shared in our informal dialogue and during interviews. Mostly, I just listened and asked for clarifications when needed.

In consequence of teaching first grade at Title 1 schools for a decade, freelance writing of fiction and nonfiction children’s literature featured in a commercial literacy programs, and instructing preservice teachers and graduate students in Reading, Writing, and Children’s Literature courses, I have reached an unyielding oppositional stance to CCSS, to its widespread adoption that favors particular materials and pedagogies in school reading instruction and that disproportionately promotes certain dimensions of literacy (Kucer, 2014). Though I appreciate the benefit of curricular standards and the necessity of building foundational early literacy skills in decoding, fluency, comprehending structural story elements and such, I believe that they fail to embody the full potential of what a child’s reading experience could become. CCSS are not the be-all and end-all of reading. Linguistic code-breaking and cognitive understanding have been
reduced to demonstrable skills on grade-level standardized assessments. Consequentially, I believe reading instruction to achieve these reductionist ends gives emphasis to being literate, and not the lifelong pursuit of becoming literate. Underlying my research design is this advocacy for a reclamation of joy in reading, that is, an invitation for young children to transact with picturebooks in ways that are freed from the clutches of these ELA curricular standards.

**Responsive Classroom Approach**

Prior to my arrival, third and fourth grade teachers at my former Title I elementary school near the Community Center had begun their participation in a mixed method study of implementation of Responsive Classroom (RC). As a control group, none of the teachers at my school were permitted to receive RC training until the study concluded. Considered to be a Tier I socioemotional and academic learning approach within a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, RC aims to develop of student's self-control, personal responsibility, ability to cooperative and to build caring, inclusive, and empathetic classroom and school communities. Through dynamic teaching practices applied throughout all curricular subjects and with all children, RC endeavors to “foster safe, challenging, and joyful classrooms and schools” by building students’ academic and socio-emotional competencies (NEFC, 2007, p.1). Upon completion of that study, my former principal allotted for kindergarten and first grade teachers, myself included, one-week of on-site professional development to be trained in Level 1 of RC. I subsequently completed Level 2 training and eventually became a RC trainer tasked with in-school
professional development geared towards familiarizing faculty and staff with RC principles and practices.

Several years of my teaching first grade had taken up three key RC practices and strategies. First, Morning Meeting is a circle gathering of teacher and students to start the day. It involves sequential components: greeting each other in friendly ways; sharing personal narratives, interests, or preferences; a whole group activity; and, review of the morning message, a daily letter from me to the class. Second, through Guided Discovery new materials are introduced into the classroom environment in ways that generate interest and excitement for possible uses and/or applications. Third, use of specific language promotes a mindfulness for what I say to children and how I say it. Borrowing from Denton’s (2007) *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language That Helps Children Learn*, this communicative practice attends to my choice of words, calm tone of voice, especially when non-punitively redirecting a misbehavior, my construction of open-ended questions to extend student’s thinking, and my active listening. After years of classroom application, these RC practices and strategies have become etched onto my personal pedagogy. They are inseparable from my identity as a teacher and from how I regard and interact with young children. RC informs my design of The Picturebook Project and my actions as a facilitator of the day-to-day sessions. Besides, all of the child participants had some familiarity with RC, for each had attended elementary schools in the Neighborhood or adjacent ones that also adopted this approach.
Participant-Directed Adaptations

Each visit to the Community Center I remained open to the research experience as it unfolded while prizing child participants’ varied experiences in their transactions with *metapicturebooks*. Being attuned to the children’s preferences, attitudes, likes, and dislikes allowed me to tailor daily session’s activities, games, books read-aloud, and “loose parts” to maintain their interested engagement and accommodate circumstances particular to the community center. Some extemporaneous adaptations were suggested by child participants or staff, and others leaned on my pedagogical knowledge and/or prior experience teaching young children from the Neighborhoods surrounding the Community Center. In case study research, Yin (2014) emphasizes “the need for you to balance adaptability with *rigor*—but not rigidity” (p. 75). For instance, by the end of the third session most of the supply of googly eyes had been exhausted. One of the child participants by happenstance a former first grader of mine, Safaa informed me of this and asked for the purchase of more. Since this request seemed to be within economic reason, I purchased more stock for the next day’s session.

By no means were any proposed aesthetic transactions or interactions with me exploitative; rather my planned sessions and interviews came second to the day-to-day needs of the child participants and staff at the Community Center. Before every session commenced, I petitioned each child participant for their daily assent. For instance, if a child indicated his or her preference to remain in the Community Center’s gym, then I would honor their choice without asking questions to tempt them to join us. If a child was hesitant or unsure, I’d candidly summarize the session’s planned activities, including a
brief synopsis of the *metapicturebooks* to be explored, and pose their decision to join us that day as an individual choice.

**Community Center-Directed Adaptations**

In a similar manner to participant-directed adaptations, I adjusted the start and end times of sessions to accommodate Community Center’s daily schedule. The sessions were to be held from 9:45 to 11:15am with 15-20 minutes added for room set-up and then clean-up. Child participants’ engagement in group games played in the gymnasium sometimes delayed the initial start time by up to fifteen minutes. Room availability was also an ongoing consideration. During my first week of The Picturebook Project, I learned that on one morning a Tai Chi group would meet in the Arts & Craft Room where The Picturebook Project was supposed to be held at that time. The Tai Chi instructor kindly allowed me to use half of the tables in the room to set-up The Picturebook Project’s materials and books in advance of his meeting. That way, when he concluded, I was able to squeeze in a 90-minute session before the child participants were scheduled to eat lunch. Also, by way of interviews, I found out that the Summer Care Program took a midday trip to the local pool every other Thursday. Owing to the departure time, I shortened the duration of Thursday session by a few minutes and opted for an earlier start time. At noon every day either groups of children or senior citizens ate lunch in the room.

During my time at the Community Center, I remained attuned to both my outsider status and my bringing in an interventional opportunity that’d likely pique the interests of more than just the immediate participants. As much I protected the anonymity of
participants, The Picturebook Project’s sessions occurred in a public space shared by many. Middle- and high-schoolers frequenting the Community Center often asked me if they could help me out in the study. To provide them with a sense of “helping out” while maintaining the integrity of my research design, I allowed for those interested to help me by “wheeling” my blue wagon or carrying tripods through the hallways to/from my designated storage area, or sorting supplies into bins and washing tables at the end of sessions to expedite cleaning so the room was readied for lunchtime. In preparation for the public exhibit, several high-schoolers collaborated on the construction of large banner that read, “The Picturebook Project” and four signs that labeled materials and artifacts: (1) “What We Read”; (2) “What We Think”; (3) “What We Made”; and (4) “What We Did”. When a special-needs child receiving one-on-one support from a Summer Care Program staff member walked into the Arts & Craft Room during a session because of a child’s curiosity in the art materials that he saw through the open door, I immediately shut off the camera and audio recorders. Then, I offered him a choice of supplies to create at a table while the child participants and I cleaned-up our daily mess.

Prior to the start of the tenth session as I was in the process of setting up the Community Center’s Arts & Craft Room, a staff member informed me of a “Code Red” for excessive heat index and a “Code Orange” for diminished air quality. He explained that all planned outdoor activities for the Summer Care Program had to be moved inside the building. Due to limited space at the Community Center as there were concurrent programs for senior citizens, the Arts and Craft room was needed. In lieu of The Picturebook Project’s final session, that staff member asked if I’d be willing, as a County-approved volunteer, to help out with all six- and seven-year-olds enrolled in the
Summer Care Program; specifically, to read aloud two *metapicturebook* titles and facilitate an opportunity for them to illustrate responses to the stories. Since none of these children were participants in the study, no data was collected. This request indicated how a staff participant used his knowledge of this research to extend a derivative of this literacy event to wider audience.

**Research Design of The Picturebook Project**

**Timeline**

The proposal for this study had been completed for my doctoral committee chair’s initial review in early June 2017. It was approved by my university’s IRB in mid-June. I began informal communications to secure the Community Center as research site in April 2017 and formal approval by the County was given in May 2017. Recruitment of participants occurred in the three days following the Fourth of July. Within that timeframe, interviews with the Community Center’s Directors and staff began as well as transcription. Over the next two weeks in July, from Monday to Friday, I visited the Community Center for at least seven hours a day to collect data and conduct The Picturebook Project’s sessions. The public exhibition as well as recruitment of visitors to the exhibit occurred on Friday afternoon of the second week of sessions. I returned to the Community Center for three full days in mid-August 2017 to conclude any outstanding interviews, to conduct the tenth and final session that had been previously cancelled, and to return all the child participants’ artwork and creations that I had collected to
photograph. My review of interview transcriptions continued through October 2017. In November, I emailed all Community Center directors and staff transcriptions of their interviews for review. By early December, two member-checked transcripts were returned to me. Additional member-checking of the final draft of this dissertation by the Community Center’s directors occurred in June 2018.

**Community Center as Research Site**

With extensive familiarity and contacts from my prior teaching and living experiences in an urban area near a major Mid-Atlantic city, I searched for a possible site for The Picturebook Project in close proximity to the gerrymandered boundaries of my former school, for I anticipated a high likelihood of access. I preferred this research to occur over the summer months when play, not school, governs children’s daily lives for they wouldn’t be beholden to academic pressures and fixed reading curriculums. In addition, I sought a site that would draw from my former elementary school's linguistically and socioeconomically diverse community as well as reflect a relaxed out-of-school environment. My former Title I public elementary school had a population dominated by a large percentage of English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners and families qualifying for free and reduced lunch as recognized by federal and county-wide school district criteria. Pie charts on the official State Department of Education website reporting public school profiles indicate that as of Fall 2017, 73.6% of the 716 students enrolled at my former elementary school are considered to be
English Learners comprise 64.2% of that same population and 86.7% identify as members of non-White racial and ethnic groups.

The Community Center is located in a historically African American Neighborhood that constitutes part of a larger District within the County. See chapter five for a more in-depth account of the sociocultural context. Children residing in an apartment complex within two blocks of the Community Center feed into my former elementary school. But their neighbors across the street in townhomes go to a different County school within the District. Two main State Routes intersect this District like an “X.” Along these thoroughfares are numerous strip malls for shopping and dining as well as businesses. The Neighborhood is located in one quadrant of this “X” and may be accessed by a Street that connects to one of the State Routes. Other quadrants reflect pockets of affluent homes near a lake and there are stretches of non-descript red-brick apartment buildings and affordable housing in another. According to 2010 U.S. Census online data of the District or “census designated place” (CDP) within which the Community Center and surrounding Neighborhood are located and from which my former school draws some of its enrollment, the overall population was 23,643. Of those, 1,370 or 5.8% comprise the five- to nine-year-old age group. My former elementary school was one of four “sister” schools that drew from this larger population. 39.5% or

---

4 To keep the research site anonymous, neither the name of the State nor elementary school will be named. I have withheld in-text citations.

5 To keep the CDP anonymous, the specific CDP will not be named. I have also withheld in-text citations. That Neighborhood in which the Community Center is located accounts for approximately one-quarter of this CDP’s land size, and so, U.S. Census statistics exceed the actual population and are merely provided as a representative sampling as a point of reference.
9,336 people identify as Hispanic or Latino of any race. 10.4% or 2,458 people identify as Asian. 15.2% or 3,599 people identify as Black or African American. The remaining population identifies their race to be either White, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or of two or more races. Individuals living below poverty represent 20.4% of the population. For census estimate purposes, in 2016 there are about 13,512 people or 57.1% identified as foreign born.

Many of these school children receive direct interventions (e.g., after school programs, extra time and attention from teachers) in Language Arts curriculum, especially reading, to attain grade level expectations that contribute to the teacher’s evaluation data and school’s demonstration of measurable progress. As a former curriculum designer of such an after-school program that targeted below grade-level English Learners, my interventions tended to promote a “simple view” of reading. Focus was on whole group read-alouds with tie-in phonics or sight word lessons. Guided reading lessons centered on decoding printed text and comprehension. Similar interventions likely happened in neighboring or “sister” elementary schools, especially given the State-wide move towards a percentage of end-of-year data and growth being factored into teacher evaluations. And so, these children’s school-based reading experiences may also be constrained to such a narrow view of reading development and governmental literacy policies.

Researching other public spaces’ availability, costs, and policies in this Neighborhood and District, I determined that prospective research sites like the local library require rental fees and pose difficulties in participant recruitment as access to them often requires public transportation. Recalling the two buses transporting students
from my former elementary school to an after-school program at a centrally located Community Center operated by the County government, I reached out to its Director, Mr. Richard, in April 2017. The director put me in touch with the Assistant Director in charge of the Summer Care Program, Mr. Kevin. I briefly explained The Picturebook Project to him. He indicated interest but had to check with his regional manager for approval. In subsequent email correspondences and phone calls, he indicated the receipt of approval and appreciation for the intervention in May 2017. A description and timeline of The Picturebook Project was emailed to him in late June 2017. By request, I completed and filed volunteer paperwork with the Community Center to be able to work with children in advance of any research.

**Recruitment of Participants**

*Elementary-aged Children Enrolled in Summer Care Program*

Purposeful sampling, and snowball sampling by word of mouth through familial relations or neighbors with children attending the Summer Care Program, helped me to identify three categories of participants. First, primary child participants included eleven elementary-aged children between 7-9 years of age present at the daily sessions. More than a dozen children would’ve required classroom-type management that would’ve been contrary to the desired relaxed, out-of-school environment that summertime afforded. A small “interpretive community” may have been possible with three children (Fish, 1980), but two children may have had a greater dependence on my input as participant-
observer. To ensure collected data was not skewed on account of that size, there had to be at least a trio of available students willing to partake in The Picturebook Project each day.

Unless the child had a birthday on or near the enrollment cut-off date, a typical seven-year-old child during the summer months just completed first grade. The lower limitation on this age range borrowed heavily from my past teaching experiences with prospective second-graders. I believed that seven-year-olds were likely have had ample school-based personal experiences in responding to picturebooks. Some were also likely to have exhibited a streak of independence in actualizing their creative ideas and thinking, for they aren’t reliant on excessive teacher modeling. Eight- and nine-year-olds just finished second and third grade, respectively. The upper limitations on this age-group had been an attempt to limit the involvement of my former students in The Picturebook Project, for they already would’ve had some familiarity with my manner of facilitation, approach to aesthetic reading transactions, and available cultural tools. At the time of recruitment, my former students would’ve been prospective fifth graders and approximately ten years old. Just one child participant had been a student in my classroom for part of my final year at my former elementary school. That child, Safaa, was a prospective fifth-grader, but at the time of The Picturebook Project, she was nine years-old, and therefore, made the cut-off. These ages and/or grade-levels correspond to those in which CCSS had addressed standards about illustrations (see chapter one), albeit limited in scope.

On my first day at the Community Center I met with two groups of prospective child participants, that, according to Mr. Kevin, would’ve likely met the approximate age criteria based on the upcoming grade level that they had been sorted into for the Summer
Care Program. I met with the first- and second-grade group and the third-and fourth-grade group separately. In those meetings, I followed a script to generate interest in The Picturebook Project. Upon introducing myself, many prospective child participants asked questions related to my former position as an elementary teacher, or they shared with me who their teachers had been from the past school year. Other questions wondered about the kinds of books we were to read or the activities we were to do. Without giving exact details, I emphasized that the books would likely not be ones that they’d find in their classrooms. I also stressed that there will be no book reports. I wasn’t there to be a reading or language arts teacher. Rather, I was there to ensure that fun would be had by all, not stress by way of taking tests, by turning in writing samples, or by being told to read aloud in front of the group. I handed my stack of recruitment flyers in both English and Spanish to Mr. Kevin. He placed them at the parent/guardian sign-in/out desk and sent home a copy with the pool of earlier identified prospective enrollees.

For the next two mornings at drop-off and late afternoons at pick-up, I stood in the lobby of the Community Center near the sign-in/out desk for four hours. Following an eligibility screening and recruitment script (see Appendix B & C), I chatted with parents, neighbors, and relatives bringing their child(ren) to/from the Summer Care Program. Mr. Kevin often pointed out parents and/or guardians of children in the right age range for me to approach. Before providing voluntary written consent forms, each parent or legal guardian was asked to confirm the prospective child participant’s birth date as well as the current enrollment status of their child in the Community Center’s Summer Care Program. Assent was attained from each child after parental permission had been received. I also fielded questions about the duration of The Picturebook Project and
whether it’s scheduling would conflict with planned Summer Care Program field trips. Some parents wanted to know if The Picturebook Project would be tutoring to help their child improve reading skills. To which I responded that we won’t be working on phonics or comprehension skills, but we’ll have experiences with many unique picturebooks that’ll provide their child with an opportunity to flex their creative muscles and engage in read-alouds. One or two parents and their children asked for specific titles and kinds of picturebooks. I showed them Mansfield’s (2015) *Find the Dot* as an example of the unique picturebooks that they’d encounter. For interested parents in a hurry to leave the Community Center or for relatives and neighbors (non-legal guardians), I provided each with a copy of the recruitment flyer to read-over at their leisure. If requested, I also provided them with a copy of the Informed Consent Form too. I assured them that I’d be present either later that afternoon or next day to address any questions and, if need be, to help parent or legal guardian complete the requisite paperwork.

Figure 4-2 features children’s portrait photographs of each other and/or self-portraits (selfies) taken during sessions. Missing are the portraits of twin brothers, sons of a Community Center staff member. They only participated in Days 4 and 5 of sessions. Otherwise, during the first few sessions an anchor chart compiled these portraits. Each child shared an introductory tidbit about himself or herself that they wished to share next to their photographs. Some children wrote their initials and other identifiable information on this anchor chart. Specific biographical information about each child from the data collected will be provided only if relevant to the findings. Included in Figure 3-2 are the pseudonyms for the nine child participants that take into account their home languages.
All of these photographs were taken by the child participants using a digital Polaroid camera. Alejandro’s photo is a selfie.

Figure 4-2: Pseudonyms of Child Participants, Selfies, and Photographs of Each Other.
Directors of Community Center and Staff Members

Prior to the start of the study, I identified prospective adult participants to include the Community Center’s Director, Mr. Richard, Assistant Director, Mr. Kevin, and some staff members. Emails and in-person phone conversations determined the directors interest in participating in The Picturebook Project. Upon arrival to the Community Center on the first day, Mr. Kevin gave me a tour of the facility while introducing me to all staff members. During these face-to-face meetings, I shared my connection to the local Neighborhood as a former elementary teacher and an impromptu overview of the study. I offered to field any of their questions. During the tour, I identified six Summer Care Program counselors, Ms. Kinsley, Mr. Wasilah, Ms. Elisha, Ms. Brianna, Mr. Jackson, and Mr. Akele, and an additional Community Center staff member, Mr. Emmett, who worked directly with prospective child participants in the Summer Care Program in his capacity as Computer Lab specialist. By way of snowball sampling, I later identified an additional staff member, Mrs. Patricia Clark (Mrs. Clark) who still lived in the surrounding Neighborhood and had first-hand knowledge of local history and literacy practices. In the following days, I approached each director and staff member to ensure that they were at least eighteen years of age and to provide each with a voluntary written consent form to review in consideration of his or her direct participation in the study.

Community Center Visitors

By the end of the first week, I communicated to the child participants that, if they so choose, there would be an opportunity to put their creations from the sessions on
display at an exhibit to be held at the Community Center. I encouraged them to invite their friends and families. Earlier in the week of the scheduled exhibition, I also provided Mr. Kevin with copies of a flyer announcing the public event in both English and Spanish. See Appendix D. In turn, he placed them at the parent/guardian sign-in/out desk and sent home a copy with each child participant in the study. In keeping with the motto inscribed above the entrance that states, “... Community Center where all are welcome”, anyone, whether family member of the child participants, staff, or a visitor, could attend the exhibit.

At the time of the exhibition, I stood in the lobby of the Community Center near the sign-in/out desk for the two-hour duration. Since patrons of the local Community Center speak over thirty languages, for any non-English speaking adult or child participants, I planned to rely on on-site translators at the Community Center, such staff members. Spanish translation of all documents was also available, but none of these contingencies were needed. Following a recruitment script and determination of eligibility to participate (see Appendix B & C), I chatted with those picking up their children from the Summer Care Program or just stopping by the Community Center. I gave a thorough explanations of the purpose and procedures of the research and invited participation to complete the anonymous comment card after walking through the exhibit. Before providing voluntary written Informed Consent forms, I asked the parent and/or legal guardian to confirm that each prospective child participant was at least five years of age. Assent was attained from each child after parental permission had been received too. Even if some chose to decline consent to participate in the research study by completing a
survey cart, I still invited everyone to see the exhibit and to select a new children’s book donated to me for the purposes of this study.

**Selection of Metapicturebooks & Other Materials as Cultural Tools**

In advance of The Picturebook Project, I preselected a collection of more than two-dozen picturebooks to bring to the Community Center as possible titles to explore during sessions of The Picturebook Project. This collection is based on criteria described below. To reflect the more recent dual trends I endeavored to select only those titles published in the early aughts; there is one exception. Selected picturebooks had to feature either unique design affordances and/or narratives that invite unconventional readership. As described in chapter two, unique design affordances relate more to materiality, not to the visual content like choice of medium in composing illustrations. These *metap* picturebooks regard the book as an object in a child’s hands and/or anticipate tactile book-handling. The words may or may not command or indicate such hands-on play. A fictional narrative may or may not be absent. Even so, in my judgement, every child reader might potentially embark on a transactional reading experience that could deviate from the conventional passive gaze at each two-page spread and sequential page turns. Witnessing undergraduates’ laughter ensue when opening Tullet’s (2011) *The Book With A Hole*, I anticipated that this *metap* picturebook’s design would similarly tempt child readers to interact with its unique affordances. *The Book with A Hole* features a die-cut void that bisects its spine that opens to a six-inch diameter hole that is large enough to stick a face or appendage through. Minimalist hand-lettered text invites readers to
envision numerous possibilities, e.g., the hole transforms into the opening of a pot and the words ask, “what are you going to cook?” (n.p.). Since the novelty of this affordance diverged from more conventional picturebooks, that title and others like it were included in The Picturebook Project.

Some metapicturebooks’ narratives feature metafictive devices yet adhere to more conventional picturebook affordances. When a fictional character realizes its spatial confinement to the page or “when characters within a story are allowed by their author to wander beyond the narrative level to which they properly belong,” boundary breaking transpires (Lewis, 2001, p. 94). This boundary breaking also extends to an anthropomorphized picturebook as character in a story realizing its status as picturebook. From this explanation, it may seem like the character may only initiate “breaking the fourth wall” to appeal directly to the reader. But boundary breaking isn’t one-sided. A reader may actively initiate boundary breaking to enter the fictional world too. For example, consider the following list of picturebook titles that exemplify the third criteria: *Press Here* (Tullet, 2010); *Warning: Do Not Open This Book!* (Lehrhaupt, 2013); *Find the Dots* (Masfield, 2015); *Don’t Please, Open This Book!* (Lehrhaupt, 2015); and *Open This Little Book* (Klausmeier, 2013). From a grammatical standpoint, these titles function in the imperative to command an implied child reader to act (or not act) in a certain way. Such titles with or without an exclamation point signify a shift of meaning making away from the objectivity of a picturebook. Readers break through constructed boundaries of their lived reality to enter a storyworld. There exists “sufficient subjectivity” to recruit or spark a child reader’s imaginative play (Bruner, 1986, p. 35).
This Book Just Ate My Dog! is an example of a boundary-breaking story, for its title declares a past misuse to an unseen audience. By demanding attention to the personified picturebook’s undertaking through a letter addressed to the reader that emerges from the gutter or mouth, the boundary between reality and storyworld blurs. This metapicturebooks is also conscious of its status as book in the hands of the child reader too. For this self-awareness of book as object anchors its request to subvert book-handling conventions by spinning and shaking in order to free those trapped inside the insatiable picturebook. That fictional narrative calls attention to an often-ignored design affordance. Table 4-1 lists the many metapicturebooks selected for this study.\textsuperscript{6} Titles such as This Book Just Ate My Dog! are located in the overlapping space between the Venn diagram’s two criteria for selecting metapicturebooks based on ongoing trends. Otherwise, each metapicturebook need only to have met one criterion to have been selected.

\textsuperscript{6} See Annotated Bibliography for a brief synopsis of each title.
Table 4-1: *Meta* picturebooks selected for The Picturebook Project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles that feature trend #1: Self-awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>This Book Just Ate My Dog!</em> (Byrne, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Book Is Out of Control!</em> (Byrne, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Is My Book!</em> (Pett, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Is There a Dog in This Book?</em> (Schwarz, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Open Me... I'm a Dog</em> (Spiegelman, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Open This Little Book</em> (Klausmeier, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Open Very Carefully: A Book with a Bite</em> (Bromley, 2013).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles that feature both trends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>You’re Finally Here!</em> (Watt, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I Want to Be in a Scary Story</em> (Taylor, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I Will Chomp You</em> (John, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Book Will Not Be Fun.</em> (Dunlop, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Help! We Need A Title!</em> (Tullet, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>We’re in the Wrong Book!</em> (Byrne, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Book That Eats People</em> (Ferry, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Book With No Pictures</em> (Novak, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Battle Bunny</em> (Scieszka, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Blobfish Book</em> (Olien, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Is a Serious Book</em> (Parachini, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>We’re in the Wrong Book!</em> (Byrne, 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles that feature trend #2: Novel Affordances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Find the dots</em> (Mansfield, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wearable Book series (Lemke &amp; Lentz, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Game of Shadows</em> (Tullet, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Game of Sculpture</em> (Tullet, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Press Here</em> (Tullet, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Book With a Hole</em> (Tullet, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>One Red Dot</em> (Carter, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Is Not A Book</em> (Jullien, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zoo Faces</em> (Schultz, 2007).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In his book about the reading environment, Chambers (1991) remarks, “all reading has to happen somewhere” (p. 1). It is socially situated activity. Even if each child participant transacted with a metapicturebook, the sociocultural dimensions of the reading environment potentially shapes his or her lived experience. Cultural tools also influence “how we read: with what pleasure and willingness and concentration” (Ibid.).

To provide them with means for realizing their forthcoming inspired responses, I purposefully curated a broad selection of materials with the added caveat that there may be additions. It was my hope that these would endeavor to welcome all manner of reader responses beyond verbal ones that have been the focus of past research studies.

Without grant monies to fund this study, just the prospect of a qualified educational expense federal tax deduction, some of these art materials and storage containers came from the Dollar Tree, discount vendors featured on online sites like Amazon.com, and when in a fix because supplies were running low, a franchised craft store near the research site, A.C. Moore, and Home Depot. Materials included, but were not limited to, an assortment of colored construction paper and felt, scissors, glue sticks, liquid craft glue, markers, crayons, yarn, cardboard, googly eyes, chenille pipe cleaners, a variety of washable acrylic paints, toy animal figurines, watercolor paints, an assortment of brushes, clay, molding tools, pencils, pens, permanent markers, oil pastels, tissue paper squares, and colored pencils. Additional supplies were determined upon primary participant’s request that were within budget and availability. Discovery of foam lunch trays in the Arts & Craft Room became an additional material preferred by some child participants.
More readily associated with preschoolers (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2015a) and/or outdoor play (Sutton, 2011), loose parts are collected materials in an environment which children may freely explore. Promoting creativity and divergent thinking through invention, imagination, experimentation, and artistic expression (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2015b), children playfully engage with loose parts like a bricoleur adapts to “whatever is at hand.” Their designs reflect aesthetic experiences. From Josef Froebel to Caroline Pratt and Maria Montessori, wooden building blocks have typified open-ended loose parts found in early childhood classrooms for centuries. Composed of natural and synthetic materials, loose parts come in all shapes, sizes, and matters. For this study I gathered loose parts in a short time-span of two weeks and at minimal cost that included wooden three-dimensional shapes like cubes and cylinders, wiring end-caps, coffee stirrers, metal washers, wine corks, golf tees, pebbles, smooth colored glass stones, and collected natural materials like moss, twigs, and sticks (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2014).

**Visits to Community Center**

Once the neighborhood became aware of my returned presence at the Community Center, several unexpected visitors, such as former first graders of mine that had become middle and high school students and parents of former students, stopped by the Community Center to say “hi” to me. I valued these conversations, for they reinforced my acceptance as an insider to this local community despite my time away. Given the boundedness of this study, maximizing my time for ethnographically informed data collection when visiting the Community Center became a priority when not conducting
sessions of The Picturebook Project. Given the carload of materials and A/V equipment to haul in and out of the Arts & Craft for each session, Mr. Kevin and the Computer Lab specialist, Mr. Emmett set aside a secure space for me to store these items as well as conduct my research. The catch-all music room had counter space, chairs, and a high-top table in addition to a keyboard and drum set. Although there were three locked doors, staff members kindly opened the door adjacent to the computer lab for my entry as needed.

Temporal boundaries limited the scope of my data. Although Yin (2014) says to “distinguish data about the subject of your case study (the ‘phenomenon’) from data external to the case (the ‘context’)” (p. 34), the mutually constitutive nature of child reader responses precludes such clear-cut differentiation. Even so, multiple stages of my research agenda had been dedicated to these contextual ends. Interviews with child participants, directors, and staff were the most protracted as I had to work around lunch and meeting schedules, availability of a quiet space in which to audio record the interviews, and for some child participants, absenteeism and behavioral time outs for not meeting Community Center expectations. Afterwards, I’d upload digital files of audio recordings of the interviews onto an external hard drive. Then, I’d send those files out to a transcription service.

While I ate lunch after each session, I uploaded and printed out polaroid photographs from the digital camera that were taken by child participants. Then, later in the afternoon I’d invite that photographer to arrange the printed photos on a posterboard in any way that they choose so as to share what happened during that day’s session. The afternoon of the originally scheduled tenth session busied me with setting up the public
exhibit. I set aside one afternoon to visually document the space and map out the interior and exterior of the Community Center. On several occasions during the initial recruitment visits, I’d also sit on one of the couches in the lobby of the community center to observe the comings and goings. Those observations were recorded in fieldnotes.

**Sessions of The Picturebook Project**

Of the sixteen day-long visits to the Community Center from early July to mid-August 2017, ten mornings occurring Monday to Friday over two consecutive weeks had initially been dedicated to The Picturebook Project’s ninety-minute sessions. But as a subsequent section about Community Center-directed adaptations will indicate, an exigent circumstance arose that unexpectedly delayed the tenth session. In mid-August, I returned to the Community Center to meet with child participants that were present to join the final session in order to reflect on their experiences during The Picturebook Project. Only three children were available.

Prior to the start of the study, I wrote out activities/prompts that I anticipated would transpire during these sessions and outside resources/materials with which child participants would have a chance to interact. See Appendix H for tentative session plans. I also prepared a list of all the questions that I’d conceivably pose to child participants in conversation during those sessions. I planned for Chambers' (1996) "tell me" approach, as documented in a questioning protocol (see Appendix G), to guide my child-centered discussions around their transactions with *metapicturebooks*. Just as John Lennon (1981) wisely composed lyrics for his song “Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy) that state “Life is what
happens to you while you’re busy making other plans,” those documents served as a mere starting point. Owing to the dynamic nature of young readers’ transactions with *metapicturebooks* and the formative nature of this intervention, these preliminary documents were not rigidly followed scripts.

**Guiding Intentions**

From the outset, four intentions adapted from Denton & Kriete’s (2000) RC-aligned book, *The First Six Weeks of School* guided my overarching design of these sessions as a pragmatic, yet formative intervention. First, anticipating the potentially disruptive nature of their reading responses as compared to that which they had been familiar in school, I realized that some semblance of day-to-day predictability might enable them to willingly cast aside their learned inhibitions, focus on their chosen tasks at hand, and feel like experts of their own literate lives. Every session had a morning message posted on the door at the entrance to the Arts & Crafts Room. In the form of a letter from me to the child participants, this daily message, usually read aloud by one of the child participants to the gathered group, indicated a potentially noteworthy activity in which they’d be engaged. This preview at-a-glance generated excitement and set the tone for each session. See Figure 4-3 for a collage of all of my handwritten morning messages. With the exception of the first and tenth session, each day had also been patterned around three principal phases of activity—an icebreaker, guided *metapicturebook* exploration, and ample opportunity for self-selected creative endeavors and literacy play in response to or inspired by *metapicturebooks*. 
Figure 4-3: Morning messages for Sessions 1-9.

Hello to all,
Welcome to the Picturebook Project!
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Thinkers,
Have you ever read a carnivorous book? Get ready to use your imagination today!
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Makers,
When is a book not a book? Let’s find out!
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Inventors,
If you could invite a book character to play with you, who or what would he, she, or it be? What would you play?
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Recognizers,
If you could be in a book, what book would you choose to be? Where? Why? How would you be, inside the book? What would happen if you lived there?
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Artists,
Have you ever made your very own picturebook? Where did you make it? When? What was it about?
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Illustrators,
If you could meet a picturebook author, who would it be? Why would you choose that one? What would you ask him or her?
Smile,
Miss Laura

Dear Authors,
Today is your last day to finish all of your creations and artwork. Tomorrow we will get ready for the exhibit and reflect on our experience together. What do you need to finish today?
Smile,
Miss Laura
Second, I methodically introduced them to the physical environment and materials. As we entered the Arts & Crafts Room for the first session, I showed them the research equipment, that is, video cameras on tripods, audio recorders, and extension cords, in need of their care and protection. I explained that the research equipment made video and audio recordings to help me to remember what we did and talked about, and to see what I might’ve missed happening during each session. Many immediately noticed that I had moved some tables and chairs in the Arts & Craft Room. I indicated that this rearrangement of furniture made space for us to meet on the floor. It also helped me to better angle the room’s view captured by the video cameras. At the beginning of the second session, I allotted time for them to touch and explore the materials, such as art tools and “loose parts” collected in tubs and displayed on one of the quarter-round tables. They dug their hands into the polished stones, animal figurines, and googly eyes.

Third, I aspired to maintain the Community Center’s expectations while creating a climate of trust and safety within the bounds of the Arts & Crafts Room while children participate in The Picturebook Project. Since these sessions began at the start of the fourth week of the Summer Care Program, I expected child participants had become somewhat accustomed to the staff, their peers, daily routine, and Community Center’s expectations. Expectations are on display in the hallways. Written in English and Spanish, these expectations address behaviors, actions, and attitudes occurring within the Community Center space. Even so, I presumed that the assemblage of child participants would be from different age-groups within the Summer Care Program, elementary schools, and ethnic backgrounds, and therefore, unfamiliar with each other and me. To come together in cooperative and supportive ways while fostering their autonomy and
reinforcing existing behavioral expectations during these sessions called for introductory
and community building activities. To help us to get to know each other and to develop a
sense of belonging, energetic greetings and group-building activities opened each session.
See last page of Appendix H for a description of icebreakers like “Waa! Wee! Woo!,”
“Just Like Me,” “Name Toss,” “Snowball Fight,” and “Hullabaloo” in the tentative
session plans (Roser, 2009).

Fourth, aside from extending the Community Center’s behavioral expectations to
these sessions, I had to establish an expectation that, despite customary ways in which
books are regarded, handled, and discussed in school, for The Picturebook Project there
lacked any expectations in how we were supposed to respond to metapicturebooks. I
believed that any disregard for their prior knowledge and experiences in reading
picturebooks might shame their existing literacy practices and, thereby, undermine their
emerging trust in me. Aware of the reductive purposes for reading books memorized in
schools, i.e., to persuade, to entertain, to inform, I designed the first session to affirm
what they already know. After our first set of icebreakers and greetings, I segued the
child participants to think about, “What is a book?” Their initial replies named genres
(fiction and nonfiction) and types of books like wordless picturebooks and chapter books.
While handing Dawit a picturebook, I queried, “How do you know a book is a book?”
That round of questioning identified the characteristic qualities of books (sizes and
shapes), multimodal content (words and pictures), constituent parts (pages, notes at the
back, title), a range of emotions they’ve experienced in response to “thinking” books
(happy, sad, funny), people involved in a book’s production (author and illustrator), and
actions that can be taken in opening a book. To further appreciate their prior knowledge, I
asked them, “What can you do with a book?” Their responses followed conventional book uses emphasized in elementary classrooms and libraries. “Read it.” “See the pictures.” “You can give a book to someone.” “After you buy it, you own it and you can write in it.” Opposing that last statement, Etimad exclaimed, “You’re not supposed to write in it!” Other possibilities included “Using a library card to borrow a book.” Then, Misrak raised her hand to add, “Let your imagination free.” Safaa clarified her understanding of Misrak’s statement in terms of a learned comprehension strategy of visualization, “Like if you only have a book that doesn’t have any pictures, you can use your imagination to imagine what’s happening when you’re reading the book.” Dawit concurred, “Oh, I know that.”

Next in that initial session, the shared reading of Miles (2015) aptly titled Book reinforced their schema about books by conceding what it isn’t and by celebrating the imaginative possibilities to which these child readers were most familiar, the illustrated storyworlds featured in picturebooks. Then, a group exercise using large dice to roll one of six prompts encouraged each to reflect on their prior experiences with picturebooks. Responses relied on a chart of twelve emoji faces whose affective descriptors had already been defined by the child participants. See figure 4-4 for a photograph of the collaborative anchor chart featuring emojis. To better understand their preferences, apathies, and aversions, each child participant attending the first session also completed an adaptation of McKenna and Kear’s (1990) attitudes about reading survey. From this formal and informal data, I soon realized any invitation for them to diverge from their routines of reading and responding in prescriptive ways wouldn’t yield any transformations without my reassurance, intentional scaffolding, and gradual release of
responsibility. Instead of a compulsory project that would’ve more closely resembled the duplication of a teacher modeled response as a craft, one of their first creative responses offered controlled choice in fashioning individual book monsters of their own design. Acting within the group’s self-defined notion of what a book monster may be by drawing on their collective imaginations and responses to shared readings of *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* and *The Book That Eats People* that were recorded on an anchor chart (see figure 4-5), this assigned task for the second and third sessions granted them a taste of creative autonomy. Of note, any checkmark on anchor charts added after a word denotes an idea, suggestion, or comment in which one child volunteered and another concurred.

Figure 4-4: Emoji anchor chart co-created with child participants.
To further clarify this paradoxical fourth intention, I gradually introduced several icebreaker activities that opportune divergent thinking. Sometimes paired with a *metapicturebook* or inspired by well-known picturebooks, these activities eventually replaced daily greetings once every child participant had mastered each other’s names.

On the second day, we stood in a circle to play a game. Using an Aerobie flying ring, I modeled the patterned language, “This is not a Frisbee.” Then, I declared an alternative usage, “This is a bracelet.” Taking turns, our repurposings included a ball, necklace, toilet, ring, wheel, tree, clock, crown, doughnut, hula hoop, face, and so on. In subsequent sessions, we repeated this game with a brown paper towel roll, and then, after reading the nearly wordless *metapicturebook* *This Is Not a Book* (Jullien, 2016), we shared

![Anchor chart of children’s brainstorm about creating book monsters.](image)
alternative imaginings of what a book as an object of design might also be. In another divergent thinking game, each child participant took turns rolling large foam dice to indicate which opening line of a familiar picturebook to read aloud from a chart. See figure 7-10. Then, he or she invented a story that followed.

*Day-to-Day Phases of Activity*

Steered by my prior teaching experiences, beliefs about literacy instruction, and abovementioned intentions, the day-to-day phases of activity also catered to the children’s feedback that I informally gathered during my hands-on facilitation and participant observation. Verbal and nonverbal indicators attended to their affect during any given activity. In “reading the room” I remained particularly aware of body language and facial expressions as clues about each child’s level of engagement, interest, and self-confidence. For example, Hakim chose to sit apart from the group during the read-aloud of Watt’s (2011) *You’re Finally Here!* during the third session. By the time the third phase of activity began, his posture slumped and facial expression became increasingly glum, I walked over to Hakim and squatted by his side (see top-right video still frame on fourth page of figure 7-1). He shared his desire to go to the Community Center’s gymnasium. While affirming his feelings, I reiterated that it was his choice to participate in The Picturebook Project and that of course, he could choose to return to the Summer Care Program.

Collective excitement and curiosity in sharing aloud and exploring different *metapicturebooks also helped to apprise me of any necessary deviations from the*
tentative session plans. Their enthusiasm or lack thereof influenced our daily agenda.

Returning to the earlier example of what extemporaneously happened upon finishing Perry’s *The Book That Eats People*, the book discussion ended with child-initiated collective efforts to keep that carnivorous book away from us. I privileged that aesthetic experience above any book discussion generated by Chambers’ (1996) tell me framework of questions about likes, dislikes, patterns and puzzles. Some days I abbreviated one or two phases of activity to dedicate more time to their creative endeavors. Table 3-2 summarizes the day-to-day phases of activity, continuities across sessions, titles of picturebooks read-aloud, and those child participants in attendance. Of note, during the fifth session pairs of child participants had the opportunity to explore numerous *metapicturebook* titles of their choosing. The titles on display for them to select from included those listed in Table 4-1, except for the ones to be read-aloud in the sessions that followed.
Table 4-2: Itemization of daily sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read Message</td>
<td>Read Message (Hakim 1-to-1)</td>
<td>Read Message</td>
<td>Read Message</td>
<td>Read Message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greet &amp; Explore</td>
<td>Go to Bathroom Review</td>
<td>Brainstorm (Invite book character)</td>
<td>Brainstorm</td>
<td>Tell Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Name Toss</td>
<td>Play Name Toss</td>
<td>Play Waa! Wee! Woo!</td>
<td>Snowball Fight</td>
<td>Explore PBs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain Agenda</td>
<td>What is a book?</td>
<td>Play Name Toss</td>
<td>Parent consent</td>
<td>Play/Explore PBs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce self</td>
<td>Share poster</td>
<td>Talk re: Camera</td>
<td>Share re: Reading</td>
<td>What is a book?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce A/V equipment</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Partner Read</td>
<td>Share findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Just Like Me</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Read Shadow PBs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Rules</td>
<td>What is a book?</td>
<td>Reflect re: School</td>
<td>CREATE!</td>
<td>Add to findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a book?</td>
<td>Explain camera</td>
<td>Tell Me</td>
<td>CREATE!</td>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Clean-up</td>
<td>Clean-up</td>
<td>CREATE!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Emoji</td>
<td>Invite to create Brainstorm ideas</td>
<td>Clean-up</td>
<td>Clean-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>CREATE!</td>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Initials</td>
<td>Take Pictures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improptu (5-4-3-2-1 Shake)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Waa! Wee! Woo!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcoming Agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Pictures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current Break-down of Activities**

- Possibilities of storytelling, Picturebook (PB) as narrative subject & object.
- Rethinking conventions. PB as narrative subject & object.
- Rethinking PBs. When PB directly addresses reader (boundary-breaking).
- Boundary-breaking PBs. PB as narrative subject & object.

**Child Participants in Attendance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etimad</td>
<td>Etimad</td>
<td>Etimad</td>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>Dawit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safaa</td>
<td>Safaa</td>
<td>Safaa</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakim</td>
<td>Hakim</td>
<td>Hakim</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>Caleb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawit</td>
<td>Dawit</td>
<td>Nuru</td>
<td>Nuru</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misra</td>
<td>Misra</td>
<td>Misra</td>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Nuru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Taham</td>
<td>Tamah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>Safaa</td>
<td>Taham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Misra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Etimad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Read-Aloud Titles**

- *Book*
- *This Book Just Ate My Dog!*
- *The Book That Eats People*
- *This Is Not a Book*
- *You're Finally Here!*
- *Warning! Do Not Open This Book!*
- *Is There a Dog in this Book*  

*Incomplete recording of session. Listed visual evidence of prior activities in red font.*

---

1 All readings of the morning message occur off-camera as it is posted to open door at entrance to Arts & Craft room. Clean-up is sometimes off camera too.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Day 7</th>
<th>Day 8</th>
<th>Day 9</th>
<th>Day 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read Message</td>
<td>Talk re: clay drying</td>
<td>Play Story Starters</td>
<td>Museum walk (Nuru) share summer school experience</td>
<td>Read Message Explore supplies &amp; charts in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore supplies &amp; charts in room</td>
<td>Hulabaloo Read Aloud Tell Me Read Aloud Share PB actions Prompt CREATE! Clean-up</td>
<td>Read Aloud Tell Me Prompt CREATE! Clean-up</td>
<td>This is Not Reflect on exhibit Dice Game w/ favorite PBs Gather &amp; Reflect on artwork (process/product) CREATE &amp; finish Review Child-Created Journal Posters of Days 3, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 Tell ME Reflect on PBs Is this a book? Storytelling</td>
<td>Read Aloud Brainstorm Add findings Request supplies Review materials &amp; art supplies CREATE! Clean-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>Tell Me</td>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>CREATE! Clean-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Focus</td>
<td>Agency in storytelling. PB affordances.</td>
<td>Unconventional ways to read a PB. Boundary-breaking PBs. PB Affordances</td>
<td>Unconventional ways to read a PB. Agency in storytelling</td>
<td>Storytelling possibilities. Agency in storytelling.</td>
<td>Agency in storytelling. PB affordances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Participants in Attendance</td>
<td>Hakim Alejandro Misrak Etimad Lydia Safaa Tamah</td>
<td>Tamah Safaa Hakim Lydia Alejandro Etimad</td>
<td>Etimad Tamah Lydia Alejandro Etimad Nuru Misrak</td>
<td>Hakim Alejandro Misrak Etimad Lydia Safaa Tamah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read-Aloud Titles</td>
<td><em>This is My Book!</em></td>
<td><em>Help! We Need a Title!</em></td>
<td><em>A Perfectly Messed Up Story</em></td>
<td><em>The WILD</em></td>
<td><em>This is My Book!</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods

A central tenet of this qualitative study was the foregrounding of child participants’ voices as knowledge producers. By design, The Picturebook Project implemented a mosaic approach to data collection (Clark & Moss, 2015, p. 4). Positioning child participants to support their individual agencies required a framework for listening rather than information gathering. Clark and Moss (2015) outline the attributes of this framework:

- *multi-method*: recognizes the different ‘voices’ or languages of children
- *participatory*: treats children as experts and agents in their own lives
- *reflexive*: includes children, practitioners and parents
- *adaptable*: can be applied in a variety of early childhood institutions
- *focused on children’s lived experiences*: can be used for a variety of purposes including looking at lives lived rather than only at knowledge gained or care received
- *embedded into practice*: a framework for listening which has the potential to be both used as an evaluative tool and to become embedded into the early years practice. (p. 7)

This study design intentionally embodies these attributes of the mosaic approach. For data to follow the movement of child reader and environment from being-perceptible to becoming-imperceptible to re-actualizing transactional possibilities in which new ways of thinking undergo experimentation, I had to foster a child-centered climate that welcomed
their self-guided creative explorations and semantic innovations. First and foremost, in sessions and during one-on-one interviews each child participant was positioned as the expert of his or her literate life. While attuned to each of their experiential preferences, discoveries, and choices through active listening and participant observation, I also adapted my facilitation and the day-to-day phases of activity to their whims and curiosities.

In designing a qualitative research study Creswell (2018) proposes procedures to increase the credibility and trustworthiness. Most prominent among them is triangulation. As described below, The Picturebook Project’s multiple means of data collection methods and sources not only reduce validity threats and biases through triangulation, but also contribute to the research design’s “trustworthiness and verisimilitude, or sense of authenticity” (Glesne, 2011, p. 48). For this qualitative study data were gathered from multiple sources, including: (1) over 150GB of audio- and video-taped recordings of each session of The Picturebook Project, (2) child participant’s constructed artifacts (as documented in video still frames and photographs taken by me and child participants); (3) audio-recorded, transcribed, and member-checked semi-structured interviews; (4) documents (collaborative anchor charts generated during sessions and child-created posterboards featuring their in-session photographs); (5) fourteen comment cards in response to visitor’s viewings of the public exhibit that also solicit biographical information and a snapshot of their literate lives; (6) additional photographs of the interior and exterior of Community Center; (7) descriptive fieldnotes; and (8) reflective memos. Some data of these sources were in keeping with the participatory nature of this mosaic approach. For instance, child participants photographed sessions and wrote
descriptions of these photos on a posterboard as their own means of documentation; in addition, those in attendance for the last session had an opportunity to reflect on their aggregate experiences. Other data sources took into account to social situatedness of this study. Comment cards from participating visitors served as feedback about their perspectives on the children’s lived experiences as featured in public exhibit. A post hoc email from Mr. Kevin also spoke to the lasting impression of The Picturebook Project on the child patrons at the Community Center.

As researcher, I became the “primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 29). As participant observer, I watched them partake in The Picturebook Project and at other Summer Care Program activities. My fieldnotes and memos documented these observations in narrative form. Initial descriptive fieldnotes detailing direct observations, sounds, movements, activities, and behaviors captured the “slice of life” or happenings at the Community Center (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 122). Reflective fieldnotes recorded on my iPhone during commutes were more subjective. On those, I gave my impressions, speculations, and next steps. During the study, I interviewed eight out of the eleven child participants. Two participants, Isaiah and Caleb, were in attendance for only two days of the Summer Care Program. During that time, it was inconvenient to them to be interviewed. Another child participant, Dawit, did not want to halt any of his playtime in the gymnasium, on the computer, or outside for a twenty-minute interview. All of these digitally audio recorded interviews occurred outside the allotted daily time for The Picturebook Project, but during Summer Care Program hours. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews asked informal questions about each participant’s personal and educational background, everyday literate lives, and
involvement at or connections to the Community Center, Summer Care Program and/or familiarity with the Neighborhood. Each interview valued actively listening to the replies to put the participant at conversational ease. A copy of the interview protocols for both child participants and Community Center directors and staff members is located in Appendix F.

All of The Picturebook Project's sessions were audio and video recorded on multiple devices. For each session, two digital video cameras were set up on a tripod to capture a wide view of the first two phases of activity. See figure 5-3 for a rendering of camera positions. “A” shows the camera’s angle during the group activities. I repositioned both of these video cameras to angle “B” to each focus on one table of child participants as they engaged in their creative endeavors. I also added a third digital video camera to focus on the third table. When students divided into small groups at these tables, I turned on digital audio recorders placed atop the tables to better record their conversations if the video cameras were unable to clearly capture them. Children’s intra-active meaning-making isn’t a straightforward enterprise of verbal expression. Unlike audio recordings and transcriptions of responses to picturebooks seen in those studies mentioned earlier in the literature review, digital video recordings from this A/V equipment gave prominence to other informal communicative modes employed during their aesthetic experiences. Video still frames captured visible behaviors (i.e. finger pointing, postural configurations, directionality of gaze, and facial expressions) in relation to the textual artifact, materials, and to other participants.
Further Considerations

Minimizing Risks

In conducting human subject research, I had a moral and ethical obligations to minimize risk of any potential harm that could happen to participants as a result of their contributions to and involvement in The Picturebook Project. The main concern associated with this qualitative study had been loss of confidentiality, for written and verbal identifiers associated with the data included names of adult and child participants as well as name of the specific research site. Additional identifiers included children’s birth dates. Visual identifiers in digital video and photographs include participants faces. These risks were made known to each participant during the recruitment stage of this project. In addition, prior to their first session, interview, or visit to the public exhibit, each participant volunteer signed and received a copy of the formal “Consent for Research” forms specific to their type of participation. These forms that document informed consent as well as the overall study had been approved by Penn State’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) in advance of data collection. See Appendix A for copies of all three “Consent for Research” forms.

Several precautions minimized these risks. Though child participants were discouraged from writing their given names on any projects or artifacts-in-progress, they requested that one anchor chart include labels of their names under their individual photographs. Thinking as both a facilitator wanting to appease their demands and researcher adhering to ethical standards, I offered a compromise that acknowledged their
expressed desires for public recognition and personal belonging while protecting their privacy by not featuring that anchor chart in this write-up. All child and staff participants received pseudonyms reflective of their uniquely identified racial, ethnic, and/or religious naming conventions. The site has been generalized to a Community Center in a Neighborhood described as being located in a major mid-Atlantic city’s greater metropolitan area. Neither State nor County have been named.

**Member-Checking**

Admission of my subjectivities or researcher biases is not a failing of this study’s design to eliminate them, but a limitation on my interpretive understandings of this particular social phenomena (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995). For some of the Summer Care Program’s staff who participated in The Picturebook Project, the Community Center and its surrounds were central to their childhood upbringing or raising of families. Layering their insights collected during interviews helped me to construct an oral history of this site. As the current Director of the Community Center and son of a former Director, Mr. Richard and his family bore witness to neighborhood changes such as the closing of an African American elementary school on account of desegregation orders, construction of the Community Center at that former school site, and lived tensions that arose on account of an influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants to certain pockets (or streets and apartment complexes) within the neighborhood in the mid-1980s. Mrs. Clark, an African American staff member at the Community Center whom I met through snowball sampling, is a former civil servant for the military and long-time retiree who has invested herself in the
youth patron’s wellbeing, for she generously provides after-school snacks, converses with parents at the sign-in/out sheets, and takes on the role of a matriarchal leader in her advocacy of community-based needs. She, too, recalled the changes to the infrastructure and composition of the neighborhood over nearly five decades. Two high school graduates and community college students were staff members assigned to the after-school and Summer Care Program. Still residing within walking distance to the Community Center, they reminisced about their lived experiences when relocating to the area as Ethiopian and Pakistani immigrants, respectively, and the personal meaningfulness of the Community Center as a safe space and its staff as educational and/or athletic mentors to them.

Despite my teaching of children from that neighborhood, including students who attended the after-school program at the Community Center, my prior interactions had been limited to knowledge of its whereabouts and phone calls about forgotten backpacks left behind in my classroom. Before entering this research site, I had assumed that my former students of primarily Ethiopian, Eritrean, and African American descent, who took the bus to the Community Center, went there to play or hang out, especially if no one was at their homes by school dismissal time. To keep these preconceptions in check, I had to be open to contrary evidence throughout the qualitative research process (Yin, 2014). At times I faltered to do so. In an interview segment, Richard hinted at the negative impact of County-wide registration and attendance policies pertaining to the Summer Care Program. If a child is absent for three consecutive days, his or her spot opens up to another child on the waiting list. He continues, “Before we had parents that would sign up for all eight weeks and be on vacation for six of the eight. But they’ve
paid, they just want to reserve a spot. They made us change that this year.” I followed up with a question about how this policy affects working parents. Mr. Richard responded, “That I don’t know.” Presumptions about families like that of my former primary students from same neighborhood clouded this line of questioning. Impartiality requires accommodating a plurality of perspectives in a nonjudgmental way while recognizing the virtues of a safe, welcoming, child-centered, out-of-school environment that the Summer Care Program’s staff at the Community Center prizes.

Even though all adult participants, both staff and directors, were afforded the opportunity for member checking of their interview transcripts, only the Community Center’s Director and Assistant Director responded to my emails with minor wording or clarification changes to and/or endorsement of their earlier responses. Maxwell (2013) explains the significance of this respondent validation to solicit feedback about data and its conclusions in qualitative research:

This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (p. 126-7)

Both also received the final draft of this dissertation with instructions to focus on chapters 4-5 and 7 to validate representations of them, the Community Center, and its Summer Care Program, and surrounding Neighborhood in the method sections, and to ensure accuracy of my findings’ rich, thick descriptions, that is, there lacked any misinterpretations.
Realizing Data Saturation

The Picturebook Project investigated transactional possibilities that transpired when elementary-aged children situated in a particular out-of-school environment were encouraged to diverge from in-school expectations of reading responses and book-handling conventions during a two-week intervention at an urban Community Center. In choosing metapicturebooks, open-ended art materials, and “loose parts” along with elaborating my guided intentions, I intended to occasion opportunities for child participants to expand creative meaning potentials. As discussed in the conceptual framework, the-reader-in-the-environment-as-a-whole is the first step towards recognizing the co-constitution of child readers and environment, including metapicturebooks and other cultural tools within the social context of the sessions. For data to follow the movement of child reader and environment from being-perceptible to becoming-imperceptible to actualizing transactional possibilities in which new ways of thinking undergo experimentation, I had to foster a climate that welcomed creative explorations and semantic innovations. My guiding intentions, purposeful design of this pragmatic intervention from session-to-session, and data collection methods comprise the bricolage of ethnographically informed means to answer my research question as a case study.

Without a one-size-fits-all formula to signal when I reached data saturation and given the temporal boundedness of The Picturebook Project, I follow Fusch and Ness’s suggestion to weigh the data in terms of being “rich as quality and thick as quantity” (2015, p. 1409). As a considerable depth and breadth of data were collected during the
sessions, I appreciated the necessity of continually refocusing my research objective onto “the-reader-in-the-environment-as-a-whole” and reframing my research question to funnel data analysis. Certain reader responses begged inquiry. As the chapter six will demonstrate, my data analysis coped with categorizations of findings that render power imbalances in a dichotomous representation of subject and object of study. I also eschewed any fixed divide between myself as researcher and the data I collected.
CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING AS SOCIAL CONTEXT

Come and play
Everything's A-OK
Friendly neighbors there
That's where we meet
Can you tell me how to get
How to get to Sesame Street
(Raposo, 1969)

Our surroundings—materialities, conditions, and sociocultural forces of a particular setting—affect the way we read. In turn, we influence our environment too. To give due consideration to the site of child participants’ aesthetic experiences wherein the locus of their meanings was constructed, this chapter explores the physical setting and sociocultural landscape—the Neighborhood, Community Center, Summer Care Program, and Arts & Craft Room. Through careful description and interview excerpts I intend to make visible the invisible so as not to displace the children’s meaning-making from these environs. In advance of the chapter seven’s attending to the actual production of meaning as it unfolded in The Picturebook Project, it is necessary to explicate the context in the aggregate in order to better understand the intra-active relations happening between child reader and environment. Given these intentions, this chapter’s discussion provides an overview of findings related to the outermost ring represented in figure 4-1, the historically African American Neighborhood, then methodically zooms into the heart of the space wherein sessions occurred, the Arts & Craft Room.
A Community Center in a Historically African-American Neighborhood

Many staff members alluded to the “rich history” of the Neighborhood and Community Center. From my interviews and observations of signage posted on the walls of the Community Center, I pieced together the general circumstances and milestones that led to its construction in the 1970s. Filling out gaps in these recollections of the Neighborhood’s social history were: (1) a State University researcher’s publicly available recorded interview with Mrs. Clark about her growing up under segregation and raising four children in the Neighborhood on the cusp of desegregation that was part of an online collaborative project funded in part by a Scholarship-in-Partnership Grant from the National Trust for Historical Preservation; and (2) a national news correspondent’s introspective book journalistically tracing the sociohistorical development of the Neighborhood and its surrounds within the District from the post-Civil War Reconstruction period onward to present day.7 On account of her direct contributions, Mrs. Clark directed me to both of these sources to help my efforts to better situate the “rich history” of the Neighborhood and Community Center.

Mrs. Clark

Mrs. Clark was a plucky, big-hearted, and no-nonsense 87-year-old resident of the Neighborhood for, as she said, “practically all my life.” From the after-school hours and

---

7 To protect the identity of Mrs. Clark and of the Community Center, in-text citations for these two sources have been purposefully omitted but will either be named as online interview and introspective or use the reference symbols # and $, respectively.
evenings she works at the Community Center and her volunteer work, Mrs. Clark keeps her finger on the pulse of the Neighborhood and has had a hand in the nurturing of generations of local children. Her daughter nicknamed her “The Warden” of the Community Center. Several staff members echoed a similar sentiment. Mrs. Clark’s forthright beliefs about accepting responsibility for one’s actions and the tone in which she spoke simultaneously commanded attention and respect, especially when directed at elementary or middle school-aged children or teenagers.

To Mr. Akele, a community college student with aspirations to become a collegiate basketball player and earn a degree in cyber security, a staff member of the Summer Care Program, and also decade-long resident of the Neighborhood who hailed from Ethiopia, Mrs. Clark had once seemed like a “mean person” who was “a little rough around the edges.” But after his persistent politeness in addressing her and adhering to the Community Center’s rules, Mr. Akele reported that he has since earned her respect. Now, when he greets her and asks about her day, he explained that she jokingly retorts, “I was good until you came.” In his youth, Mr. Akele and his friends once thought Mrs. Clark “could run the Community Center herself.” For those children who frequent the Community Center and interact with Mrs. Clark, she has a pivotal role in shaping their values. She explained, “When you go by the rules, you have no repercussions. When you don’t go by the rules, you have repercussions. Somebody’s gonna blast you about it.”

One late afternoon a teenager wearing a white tank top walked up to Mrs. Clark’s sign-in desk. She immediately pointed out that he was wearing an undershirt and Community Center Rule #8 states (see figure 5-1), according to the sign posted adjacent to her desk,
“Shirts and shoes required.” After his futile attempt to argue that a tank top is a shirt, Mrs. Clark retorted,

I was married. I had a husband. I know what an undershirt looks like. You got to have a shirt on. Do you really want to have your sweaty germs, your sweat get on people. And it’s not healthy…Once you’ve got a shirt on, it absorbs the perspiration, and keeps the body cool.

That teenager promptly exited the building and returned about twenty minutes later wearing a proper t-shirt.

Mrs. Clark considered herself to be “just the messenger,” but I’d add that her enforcement was effective. Young children, especially those she quipped might be “screaming and hollering” had a similar reaction to her presence. She rhetorically questioned them, “you don’t want people to think that you are all a bunch of bad children,” then proceeded to allow them to talk so long as they keep their voices down. She continued to explain in her interview with me, “I just look at them and they just know what they’ve got to do.” Recalling when a parent a communicated admiration for the manner in which she talks to the kids, Mrs. Clark stated her principle, “Give me respect, and I’ll give ya’ll respect. I respect the Center, I respect the self, and I’ll respect ya’ll the same way.” Underneath Mrs. Clark’s straightforwardness was her love for the Community Center, and especially for the Neighborhood. Her decades-long advocacy for those in the Neighborhood came from her personal experience with the inequities and injustices of segregation.
A watershed moment for Mrs. Clark that set into motion her political activism occurred when, despite a high efficiency rating that marked her above the cut-off promotion in her professional annual review, she was demoted from one governmental agency to another. She lamented, “I just couldn’t see any way of getting ahead at all.”

Her pay grade on the General Schedule (GS) pay scale for civilian governmental employees remained stagnant. She noted how in the mid-twentieth century “you could barely get a GS-2 for blacks, no matter how much education you had.” Through a friend’s inside knowledge about a GS-3 position opening, she applied and never looked back. Those actions emboldened her self-advocacy in later years. She took the initiative to write to a U.S. Congressman after being overlooked for a job promotion that would’ve elevated her to a position of Chief of a governmental department. After her Congressman sent a letter to a top-ranking military official, she adds, “within two weeks’ time I was promoted to Chief… So, I know it can be done.” Even now, her memberships on the
Advisory Board for the Community Center, Neighborhood Civic Association, Black Women United for Action, and NAACP mark a continuation of her advocacy work to bring about change reflective of the Neighborhood’s ongoing needs and to empower her fellow neighbors in seeking that change. She continues to encourage teenagers to register to vote when they turn 18 because, “if you don’t like what’s going on, vote them out.” Owing to her many decades of political action and advocacy work, Mrs. Clark has also earned a second nickname, The Mayor.

**Urbanization**

In the years immediately following the 1865 Union victory in the U.S. Civil War, emancipated slaves in the State relocated to live in “segregated enclaves, most of them physically separated from the surrounding white-only areas”. The Neighborhood began as one such Reconstruction-era settlement when a freed African American used his savings earned through governmental work to purchase fifty-acres in 1876. That farm land which became the Neighborhood could only be accessed by a single Street entrance—the same one that I drove through each on each visit to the Community Center. Mrs. Clark recounted this often-muddied Street that she had to traverse every morning to get to the only nearby bus station located well outside the Neighborhood to take her to work. Unlike adjacent white neighborhoods, up until the late 1960s and 1970s, that Street remained unpaved and without street lights. The Neighborhood lacked a public water supply and sewer lines too. “Virtually every quality-of-life upgrade for African Americans in the [Neighborhood] had come only in response to their agitation.”
consequence of the “inadequate” investment in transportation, communication, energy, and sanitation infrastructure, a 1975 federally-funded County survey deemed this African American Neighborhood to have “low improvement values” in comparison to the surrounding white communities. That monumental survey signaled the beginning of the end of their marginalization. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Clark, her husband, and a handful of life-long residents garnered support to challenge the County’s Board of Supervisors to allocate federal funds to improve the streets and build a community center in the Neighborhood. At a public hearing that featured hours of Neighborhood resident’s testifying to their plight and that lasted into the wee hours of the morning, the Board approved a development plan. Mrs. Clark and those leaders became local heroes. “This sense of solidarity found symbolic expression in the new… Community Center.” Built on the homestead site that once belonged to the original African American purchaser of this Neighborhood’s land, the Community Center featured a gymnasium, lounge, kitchen, several large meeting rooms, and a stage. In the almost forty years since its construction, the Community Center has outgrown it space. In thinking about any proposed changes to the Community Center, several of the staff members desired more space, especially a second gymnasium to accommodate demand. Figure 5-2 features a map of the interior and exterior of the Community Center as rendered in my descriptive fieldnotes.
Desegregation

In the 1920s there was yet to be a school for the local African American children in the Neighborhood to attend. As Mrs. Clark was keen to proudly note, the Neighborhood’s first African American teacher was her Great, Great Aunt. To facilitate

\[ f \] This historical description gleaned from original sources comes from the website of the government subsidized daycare program currently occupying the building that once was the Neighborhood’s elementary school. To keep the specific location of the research site anonymous, I have omitted in-text citations, but superscript \( f \) refers to it.
in the construction of a school, Mrs. Clark’s relative sold her share of property that once belonged to her parents to the County government; but that school was short-lived and its doors closed by the 1940s. The Neighborhood petitioned and pressured the County to build another school.

On May 14, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court’s Chief Justice Earl Warren’s delivered the unanimous opinion for *Brown v. Board of Education*. He pronounced, “We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal….” In the aftermath of a second Supreme Court ruling *Brown II* (1955) that directed desegregation to proceed with “all deliberate speed”, segregationists controlling the State and County governments remained determined to defy these landmark rulings. Not only did the County refuse to comply, but defiantly named two high schools after Confederate army generals. At the time of data collection for The Picturebook Project the contentious debate over renaming one of those high schools, which the Neighborhood falls within its boundaries, had reached fever pitch. Several of the Summer Care Program’s staff had graduated from that high school. With national attention drawn to the outcome of this controversy, in Fall 2017 the County school board voted to change the name—to no longer whitewash history, but to honor those who champion equal rights.

On May 19, 1957, a newly built, yet segregated Elementary School named in honor of the Neighborhood’s first African American teacher opened. Its location was the homestead site that once belonged to the original African American purchaser of this Neighborhood’s land. In 1961 the County lifted their de jure policy of maintaining separate public schools for black and white students, only to replace it with de facto
segregation. For black families were given the option to enroll their children in white-only schools, “if they were willing to accept the transportation difficulties and the inevitable hostility.” By the late 1960s, the all black Elementary School closed and Neighborhood children were bused to integrated schools (one of which was my former elementary school). Nearly a decade later, the Community Center was built adjacent (and connected) to the Elementary School which had been converted into a government-subsidized day care as it stands today.

Influx of Immigrants

Enactment of The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 had a profound impact on the demographics of the County, District, and, most especially, the Neighborhood. The Neighborhood has experienced a continual influx of global immigrants for forty or so years. A fair share of these immigrants came from countries considered to be global hotspots experiencing war, revolutions, religious conflicts, economic strife, or natural disasters. According to the introspective, teachers at the District’s high school “wryly noted how they could predict an influx: Whenever anything had happened somewhere in the world, a year later a new group of refugee students would show up at their front door.” Affordable housing attracted Hispanic, North African, Middle Eastern, and Asian immigrants to the Neighborhood and surrounding areas in the District. By 1984 the local discourse converged on proposed mosque to support its growing Muslim population. The author of the introspective comments, “The foreigner influx provided a coda to the dramatic desegregation narrative.” Within a
decade County schools shifted their focus from racial integration to availing resources for ESOL students. On this topic, a former African American Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president (of my former elementary school) recalled fielding parental concerns about the immigrant minority students receiving more attention than African American children. To which the PTA president advised parents to engage more with the teachers, administrators, and staff. As local immigrants also linked up with recreational and after-school programs at the Community Center for the benefit of their children, initial resentment towards this population transpired, for many had been unaware of the African American Neighborhood’s past struggles and history in securing these County resources.

**Mr. Richard**

Mr. Richard is a second-generation Director of the Community Center. He is also a “product” of the Neighborhood and remembers the construction of the Community Center when he was a “little kid.” His father attended the former all black elementary school until it closed. In his childhood Mr. Richard occupied much of his free time playing hoops at the Community Center’s gymnasium before moving elsewhere in the County and attending private middle and high schools. He went on to graduate as a Division I college athlete, became a professional basketball player in Europe, and joined a few NBA workouts prior to his fifteen-year career working for various County agencies, of which the past four years have been in his current position. Mr. Richard reminisced about the closeness of the two-mile wide Neighborhood before demographic
changes took hold; he reflected, “everything took place in the neighborhood.” This African American Neighborhood became quite self-contained. He explained how you could spend all day walking from one end of the Street to the other. From first-hand experience, one of the college-aged staff, Miss Brianna, considers the Neighborhood a “really tight community” in which “everybody knows everyone.” Mrs. Clark spoke of an annual Neighborhood reunion that brings back former residents who’ve been away for years. Mr. Richard conveyed a similar sentiment about the close ties that people maintain with the Neighborhood. In the first year Mr. Richard became Director, attendance at the Community Center went from 25,000 to 55,000. He attributed this upsurge to “just people being familiar with” him and his outreach efforts. To newcomers it remains a “hidden gem” until they typically hear about it through “word of mouth.” After the Community Center accommodated the needs of Muslim women at the fitness center, he observed, “they’re now signing their kids up to come to our summer program, after-school program.”

As older generations moved out of the Neighborhood and sold their properties, Mr. Richard noted that “relationships started to change.” He added, “communication wasn’t the same.” For the current generation of elementary-aged children living in what had once been a close-knit Neighborhood, Mr. Richard remarked, “I don’t think they appreciate it like we did.” When riding his bike as a kid, Mr. Richard explained in his interview, “there was [sic] unwritten rules as to where you could and couldn’t go.” He added, “you just knew that you weren’t wanted” in certain neighborhoods. He recalled walking from his Neighborhood through another quadrant of the District’s “X” to attend Friday night high school football games in the mid-1980s. The neighborhood surrounding
the high school had undergone a recent surge of Hispanic, namely Salvadorian and Honduran immigrants. Walking back home from a game one night in the mid-1980s, threatening profanities were lobbed at him. Afterwards, with concerns about his safety Mr. Richard no longer walked to those games. Numerous minority-on-minority aggressions documented at that high school gave way to the installation of “human relations specialists,” two well-respected community members—a former commander of the South Vietnamese army and Spanish-speaking County crime prevention police officer—sought to promote peaceful conflict resolution and to establish a student-run organization intended to stave off violence and fighting.

Role of the Community Center and Its Staff

Understanding of differences among the existing and burgeoning ethno-racial populations hasn’t been instantaneous, but the Community Center has served as a facilitator in the easing of tensions and continues to actively take on that role. Walking through the front doors there is a sign above its interior entrance boasting its motto “where all are welcome.” Nowadays, recreational offerings, clubs, classes, and social gatherings at the Community Center extend beyond the needs that local its activists like Mrs. Clark had firstly envisioned in their advocacy for this historically African-American Neighborhood. In trying “to serve all cultures,” the Assistant Director Mr. Kevin stated, “Anything that you need help with that we are capable of doing, we will go out of our way to, to make sure we can accommodate you.” Several staff members echoed this sentiment. Towards the end of my interview with Miss Brianna, I asked her “what do you
want me to know about the Neighborhood and Community Center?” To which Miss Brianna replied,

We’re very welcoming here. We don’t judge because we are very diverse…We try to be as understanding as we can. And if we don’t, we ask questions and we try to relate. And we’re not here to make anybody feel discouraged.

From provisions of breakfast, lunch and snack for children at the Summer Care Program, and access to a fitness center and public computer lab to Thursday’s bread donations from local bakeries arranged atop the lounge’s pool table, the Community Center primarily benefits children, families, and senior citizens in the immediate Neighborhood and District. Through programming, often made at the suggestion of its nonprofit advisory board, the Community Center makes concerted efforts to heed its motto.

Of late, there has been an unfortunate “disconnect” between the needs of the Neighborhood and County pressures to conform to strict guidelines in ways that become contrary to meeting those needs. Mr. Richard has noticed a gap in positive self-imaging for teens. County-wide rules have thwarted his vision of pairing those teens with adults in the Neighborhood to help them understand the consequences of their choices. Prospective mentors with minor infractions on their juvenile record that have turned their lives around are precluded from taking on such roles. Believing “they would have stayed on that line if they just had someone, some experience, some feedback about what was going on,” Mr. Richard lamented, “a lot of these kids… are no longer walking that fine line.” As Mrs. Clark pointed out the difference of vision in the 1970s and reality of today, “we didn’t realize that [the Community Center] was going to be county-wide. We thought it would be community-wide.” Today’s Community Center caters to more than just the
Neighborhood; it’s poised to serve all County residents, and that has led to overcrowding or, in the case of the Summer Care Program, placing children on a waitlist once maximum capacity of one-hundred children has been reached.

Throughout the year, elementary-aged children from the four “sister” schools convene at the Community Center. Whether it’s for after-school care, the Summer Care Program, or Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon karate lessons, Mr. Kevin recognizes this coming together as an opportunity to develop social as well as academic skills. He shared, “this gives them a chance to learn different cultures, different activities, new skills sets.” To several staff members and both directors, developing personal relationships with these children by talking to them and getting to know them have become the primary means to accomplish these ends. Mr. Kevin explained, “It’s more than just, here, you’re at the Center. Figure out something to do. We want to know who they are, where they come from, a little about their background so that way we can help them develop and grow.” This one-on-one attention has been tremendously influential. Mr. Richard gave each child attention by way of a high-five and “asking how their day went” or “what can I help you with?” That purposeful action lifted them up and built rapport.

Working as the front desk receptionist in the evenings during the school year and as Summer Care Program staff, Miss Kinsley has witnessed grown-ups, who were once child-attendees of the Summer Care Program and after-school program, return to the Community Center because of the “positive strong influence” of those personal relationships and mentorships. Recalling those occasions, Miss Kinsley reflected, “I’ve just learned that everyone needs somebody to be, you know, that person for them. To be
their mentor….” She knowingly shoulders that responsibility to be “that person” in her current capacity working with elementary-aged students. She shared with me some of the visitor’s memorable comments in the transcript excerpts below:

- ‘I remember you used to help me with homework. And now I’m in college.’
- Or some have come back and just really share their college experiences and say ‘I thank you for helping me when I was younger because I don’t think I would’ve been where I’ve been now.’…
- ‘I thank you. I don’t think I would’ve made it.’ Because a lot of the students, they speak English but their parents don’t speak English. So, they’re teaching their parents as well outside of educat— their school systems. When they come here, they’re getting additional English help as well as their parents. So, it definitely comes full force.

Two Summer Care Program staff similarly relayed stories about the significance of the Community Center on their personal and academic development. A current community college student pursuing an associate’s degree in cybersecurity and ethical hacking, Mr. Wasilah immigrated from Ethiopia to Seattle when he was eight-years-old. In eighth grade his family moved into the Neighborhood and he immediately started going to the Community Center “almost” every day because of his love for music. Tucked away in a narrow room adjacent to the Computer Clubhouse is Music Room that had been set-up for recording. Though the instruments had since been disassembled at the time of the study, and temporarily set aside as a place for me to store materials for The Picturebook Project and to conduct interviews without noise interference, Mr. Wasilah shared his
dream to get the Music Room back to its heyday. In addition to the drum set, he reminisced, “we had a mic, we had the software, we’re able to make beats, we had the piano, it was already there…I was recording.” To Mr. Wasilah, the Community Center was an escape and a place to go to avoid the perils of the outside world that might have gotten him in trouble.

Mr. Akele touted a similar sentiment. While indicating “the bad stuff around” like “drugs, gangs” that teenagers like himself could’ve easily been caught up in, his sense of gratitude for the opportunities that the Community Center has afforded him, namely because of the dedicated staff, was unmistakable. From Mr. Emmett setting aside space and time to assist him with academics, to Mr. Richard running him through basketball workouts, Mr. Akele had always felt welcomed, in his words, “like I’m part of a family…bigger than my own….” And his role has since reversed. He now is able to place himself in the shoes of the young children attending the Summer Care Program or after school program. Acknowledging his own social awkwardness and feelings of being an outsider, to Mr. Akele his ESOL classes and time spent at the Community Center helped him to learn to make friends. He clarifies the significance of his own experiences informing his current interactions with elementary-aged children in this snippet of conversation:

Mr. Akele: So. like a lot of time when I see my, when I see these kids here, ‘cause they have like… They, they’re different, or they talk different, or they just don’t know how to comprehend some stuff like other kids I, I try to…I see myself in them so I try to…

Me: You see, you see yourself, that younger self transitioning here—
Mr. Akele: Yeah. So, like I try to, I try to make it as easy as them, with them as possible. Like I’m especially nice with some kids. Some of the kids are, you have to be stern with.

Me: So, it helps you to relate to them and what they’re experiencing?

Mr. Akele: Yeah, like how… Like most of these kids I can relate to what every single, what some of them are going through.

Me: Regardless of where they’re from?

Mr. Akele: Yeah, ‘cause like, you know, growing up here, you’re gonna bump into different kids and you just gotta learn how to be like, you know, courteous…how to be nice….

Appreciating the diversity of the Neighborhood and those that frequent the Community Center, Miss Brianna, and aspiring social worker, asserts that understanding of differences is of primary importance to the children enrolled in Summer Care Program.

**Summer Care Program Is Fun**

Publicly available information about the Summer Care Program is limited to an online blurb, video and downloadable .pdf application. Under the “Neighborhood and Community Services” section of the County’s website is an announcement for the Summer Care Program that occurs for the entire ten-week duration of public schools’ summer break.⁸ According to the County, the Community Center is one of eight that

⁸ To keep the research site anonymous, I did not include an in-text citation for this online reference.
offers this Summer Care Program. Its online description of the Summer Care Program advertises “an engaging, healthy and affordable recreation program for children to learn, play and serve.” Numerous activities include “team sports, games, arts and crafts, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programming, service projects, cultural field trips and much more!” Enrollment is limited to children who are rising first graders through rising sixth graders. Based on a sliding scale of household incomes, weekly fees range from $30/week to $70/week for a family’s first child. Additional children enroll at a reduced rate. There is a brief mention of scholarship opportunities available at some of the community centers.

With centralization of authority at the County-level, the Community Center has experienced diminished autonomy. Recent County-wide changes to enrollment precluded some Neighborhood parents “who were so used to signing up the week before camp starts” from being able to secure a spot for their child(ren). With registration starting the week after Spring Break, the Community Center had already reached capacity in advance of the start of the Summer Care Program and had to regrettably turn some away. Mr. Kevin notes some low-income families are reliant on the Community Center as “a place for their children to go while they’re working during the summer.” This impact of this enrollment has potentially burdened some families as well as shifted the demographics of those enrolled. Mr. Richard explains, “Whereas this year, we had people from different centers, but differ areas [of the County] come to this site.” Attendance is closely monitored. If a child is “absent more than three straight days, we have to open [the spot] up to people on the waiting list.” Mr. Richard has also witnessed the impact of these unsettling changes to the Neighborhood and those families with whom there is already a
relationship. No longer may parents sign up, pay for all eight weeks, and be on vacation for six of them, then expect their child’s spot to have been reserved.

Doors to the Community Center open at 8:30 a.m. to receive incoming children. Several mornings I observed children standing outside as they anxiously awaited entrance. The child(ren) was(were) signed in by a parent, waved goodbye, and then, dashed from the Lobby to the Multipurpose Room wherein Miss Kinsley and Mr. Wasilah usually awaited with a serving cart of breakfast. When each child finished his or her breakfast, they cleaned-up, selected a book, moved to an empty table and read. Sometimes, they’d play a game of “Heads-up, Seven-up” while awaiting the rest to arrive and finish breakfast. Around 9:30 a.m. the group traipsed across the Lobby, through the Lounge, and into the Gymnasium. The other staff, Miss Elisha, Miss Brianna, Mr. Akele, and Mr. Jackson sorted them into groups on the bleachers before starting various “all play” indoor games. As mentioned in the previous chapter, children were divided into three groups—rising first- and second-graders, rising third- and fourth-graders, and rising fifth- and sixth-graders. Octopus and surprise tag were the most repeated favorites during interviews with staff and the child participants. In addition to checkers and chess as his favorite board games to play in the Computer Clubhouse, Alejandro liked “when you get to play, like, Octopus” in the gymnasium. Tamah preferred the Computer Clubhouse to the Gymnasium, but Capture the Flag is her favorite outdoor game to play in the outdoor park adjacent to the Community Center.

By 10:30 a.m. the first of two morning rotations transpired. These rotations lasted approximately 45 minutes. For the duration of the morning until about two o’clock in the afternoon, Summer Care Program was unable to return to the Multipurpose Room. Senior
citizens made use of that space for game-playing, reading, lunch, meetings, and other planned activities. The children ate lunch at noon. If they weren’t eating under the shade of a tree outside, the rising first- and second-graders ate in the Arts & Craft Room. The Community Center was a designated “meal site,” so, according to Mr. Kevin, “no person, not just the children, no person goes hungry.” After lunch, there were usually 2-3 more rotations. All groups come together by 3:30 p.m. for a snack before parents arrive to take them home by 5pm.

Mr. Jackson, a collegiate defensive tackle and one of the African American staff at the Summer Care Program remarked on the differences between the Community Center’s Summer Care Program and school. He stated, “I feel like it's just a little, a little more freedom. I mean, you're not doing assignments, projects and stuff like that, so... And a lot more... It's basically a big recess.” Depending on the weather, one rotation might take a group outdoors. Mr. Jackson preferred to play any sports-oriented game outside, like flag football or speedball. Another group may use half of the gymnasium divided by a temporary wall to continue to play games. Jazzercise or adult dance classes would occur on the other side of the gymnasium. If the Arts & Craft Room was available, another group may have gone there to draw, assemble pre-made picture-frames or dream catchers. Sometimes, a movie was shown there too or in the Multipurpose Room in the afternoons.

Although the Summer Care Program had less focus on academics than the after-school program, staff still promoted educational games. Mr. Kevin favored Word Battle. Children were divided into groups, provided with a long word, and challenged to come
up with as many smaller words as possible using those letters. Math Trashketball and Trivia Trashketball were also popular. Mr. Kevin described the format,

> You have three lines on the floor a certain distance from the trash can. You ask a trivia question, you have teams split up. Whoever gets the question right, they get a point for their team. They get a choice of which one they want: to step at to shoot at the basket to get extra point….

He emphasized the importance placed on of games that foster cooperation and teamwork. Plus, the children responded favorably to competition too. To keep up with summer reading, thirty minutes to one-hour of time in books were allotted each day. Staff keep record of the number of books read and awarded prizes accordingly. As a caveat, Mr. Kevin adds, “it does have to be age appropriate, so we don’t want sixth-graders reading Dr. Seuss books.” Both fiction and nonfiction picturebooks were stored on a library cart in the Arts & Craft room. The Multipurpose Room also had a closet of books for all ages. Over the course of my sixteen visits to the Community Center and Summer Care Program, I observed the rising first and second graders reading in the Arts & Craft Room once. I didn’t come across any reading in the Multipurpose Room.

Charged with running the Computer Clubhouse, Mr. Emmett welcomed another group into his room. As a former cartoon animator by training and preschool teacher, Mr. Emmett’s technical savvy and patience informed his itinerary. With aspiration for “the underprivileged population to move up in technology,” he wanted for these children to know the basics in navigating computers, especially since “one of their struggles is just cutting on the computer.” His lab had approximately twelve desktop PCs operating on a Windows platform and a dozen tablets. Intent to bring STEM into the Computer
Clubhouse, Mr. Emmett sought out suitable online and free games for the children to play. A science game called Little Alchemy “draws the kids the most,” and he used their budding knowledge of basic chemistry as a motivational reward to use a tablet device. Using the free resources at code.org, Anna and Elsa from the Disney® feature-length film Frozen helped the children learn how to put together computer code to move the character on the screen. Displeased with the “peck, peck, peck, peck” of some of their one-finger typing, Mr. Emmett often made deals, e.g., “I’ll let you go on YouTube for a little bit if you just give me 10 minutes, 15 minutes of your time of you trying to use the typing program.” Friv.com, a multiplayer game, and Incredibox, a music game, rounded out the children’s options during my visits to the Community Center. Mr. Emmett also had a large table in the middle of the Computer Clubhouse that was often taken up with a sundry of projects like the engineering of a three-dimensional fantastical city or paper polyhedras, screen printing of t-shirts, or the making of slime or of fidget spinners on the three-dimensional printer. Tamah named the Computer Clubhouse as her favorite rotation. In addition to the computer games, she enjoyed making things at the table and playing games on the virtual reality headset.

At the time of the study, there were about a dozen teens aged 13-16 participating in the Summer Care Program as Counselors-in-training (CITs). Albeit the CITs tended to congregate on the sofas in the lounge or hangout on the stage, they also provided a helping hand when needed. Not only did they help out the staff with meal clean-up, but they also helped with preparations to take the 100-strong group of children on weekly field trips. On every other Thursday, nearly all of the children in the Summer Care Program went to the pool. A few stayed behind at the Community Center. Other weekly
field trips took them to various museums in the nearby Mid-Atlantic city. CITs would often escort children to the bathroom, comfort those in tears over hurt feelings, or give praise to their in-progress projects at the Computer Clubhouse.

A few that had attended elementary school when I had been a teacher were in this age-group of CITs. Although they weren’t participants in the study, they relentlessly begged to help me. Many volunteered to wheel my supply wagon to/from its storage space in the Music Room from/to the Arts & Craft Room. They often helped me to scrub the tables of dried glue and excess paint after each session of The Picturebook Project ended so that the room would be presentable for lunchtime. They even capped markers and closed lids on containers to make for easier transport. When the teens saw the public flyer about the exhibit, a few asked to make a banner and signs. On the day of the tenth session in the chaos of the high temperature Code Red and poor outdoor air quality Code Orange as staff juggled where to accommodate all of the children in limited indoor space, I had less than one hour to set-up the exhibit. Reliable CITs came to my rescue. They helped me to rearrange furniture on the stage, to hang their banner and signs, and to haul the child participants’ many creations from the Arts & Craft Room to the tabletops on set-up on the stage. To paraphrase the oft-quoted proverb of indeterminate origin, “It takes a village….”

**Organized Chaos of Arts & Craft Room**

Messes happened in the Arts & Craft Room. The counter-tops were piled high with leftover supplies from premade crafts. Board games, whose boxes had seen better
days, and puzzle boxes were stacked in two piles all the way up to the bottom of the upper cabinets. Cracked plastic tubs were tossed atop old magazines and torn copies of paperback picturebooks that were missing pages. A box of holiday supplies leftover from a “white elephant sale” occupied a corner of the counter. Puzzle pieces littered the counter’s surfaces too. A blue and grey boombox peeked out from beneath the clutter. Ubiquitous pinkish-red foam lunch trays were stacked by the dozen. One stack was near the sink. The other was near the trash bin. A TV with built-in VCR was to the left of the sink. It blocked the broken paper towel dispenser. A roll of brown paper towels sat opposite the sink. A door that led to a kiln is caddy-corner to the two countertops. Approximately 24 mismatched chairs and stools were scattered among the quarter-round activity tables. A rotating fan helped to keep the room cool as the summer sun radiated through the room’s two skylights. On a rectangular table pushed to the corner of the room, there were more tubs, games, and leftover craft supplies stacked next to an unplugged 32” flat screen television. A mobile book cart, copy machine, and recycling bin lined the walk opposite the sink. An assortment of brooms and dustpans leaned against the copier. See figure 5-3 for my visual rendering of the Arts & Craft Room sketched from my descriptive fieldnotes and accompanied by two of the child participant’s photographs. The sundry of supplies and materials in Arts & Craft Room attested to its frequent use.
Figure 5-3: My sketch of Arts & Craft Room with child participant’s photographs
Above the lounge area’s folding table of fliers and pamphlets advertising County resources there was a wall display that features print-out images framed in construction paper of famous African American inventors and athletes. Similarly, in the Arts & Craft Room, posters that resembled the front pages of newspapers and featured portraits alongside accomplishments of African American civil rights leaders adorned the walls of the upper cabinets. Paper replicas and garlands of U.S. flags hung from the ceiling and were interspersed with these posters on the cabinet doors and walls. Drilled into the cinderblock wall behind the flat screen television was signage that describes the rules of the “Arts & Craft Center.” The copier was in front of an unused dry erase board. To the left was a square bulletin board covered in red paper and U.S. flag border. A tinsel flag had been tacked to it. There were two sets of double doors in the Arts & Craft Room on the wall perpendicular to the sink. Despite the jumble of boxes, tubs, televisions, games, and craft supplies around the perimeter, the tabletops remained free and clear of clutter. The floor was spotless, and there was ample room to move around. Making messes in the Arts & Craft Room, and then cleaning them up had become routine to the child participants. Often their crafts from the Summer Care Program were set out to dry atop the table nearest the door, so that they’d be ready to take home at the end of the day. To keep the Arts & Craft Room tidy at the end of each session, I’d stand atop a chair and reach above the upper cabinets to store the child participants’ many works in progress. A few projects on trays easily balanced on piles of papers or tubs.

To accommodate the space needed for The Picturebook Project, I made one modification to the layout of the room. The quarter-round activity tables were centered in the room. This left a wide ring around which to walk, but too narrow for one to sit down
as a group to read-aloud, share a picturebook or play an icebreaker game. So, I shifted the quarter-round table nearest the sink about three-feet towards the middle of the room, then adjusted the remaining table about a foot to keep them equidistant from each other. Although this change was slight, the child participants noticed the open space right away. As they entered the room for the first session, Dawit spun around in that open space as Safaa and Hakim wandered it aimlessly for a few moments. On the wall space in front of the double doors, I posted anchor charts made from Post-It easel pads. For the fifth and tenth sessions, I propped open picturebooks to display on the floor along the perimeter of the read-aloud space below the anchor charts. To keep the metapicturebooks separate from the regular picturebooks that the child participants were welcome to modify, alter, or dismantle, the latter were put in blue tubs and placed on the floor in front of the cabinets to the right of the sink.

Nearly all of the loose parts, materials, and art supplies fit onto the quarter-round table nearest the sink, except for the paints, paintbrushes, and clay. At the second session, the first day in which we used these supplies, I took a photograph to recall the set-up of materials and supplies (see figure 5-4). This photograph helped to guide the CITs in knowing where each belonged when they helped to unload my supply wagon each morning before the start of a session. When I assisted Misrak with the paints for the first time, as the they hadn’t yet been unsealed and opened, she grabbed a foam lunch tray on which she wanted me to squirt her color choices of paints. From that moment forward, the stacks of lunch trays were recycled to become surfaces on which to create or palettes.

By and large, the child participants ignored the recording devices set-up around the Arts & Craft Room once I introduced them to the equipment. Unbeknownst to me
until I watched the hours of video recordings, Alejandro occasionally walked up to the
camera to make silly faces. One day Nuru wanted to check to be sure that the digital
audio recorder was working at her table. Listening to the recording I could hear her
repeatedly say, “Hello! Hello!” before Safaa told her to stop. During the fifth session
Nuru became really excited about Tullet’s (2011) *The Book With A Hole*. She stuck her
head through the illustrated belly of a man appearing on a two-page spread that asks,
“What did he eat too much of?” and showed off to Camera #3. She also modeled her
creations made from pipe cleaners. See figure 5-5 for still frames from that video
recording of Nuru’s demonstrations.

Figure 5-4: Photographs of quarter-round supply table prior to start of a session.
In chapter four, I mentioned how the limitations of space at the Community Center, and in particular, the availability of the Arts & Craft room impinged upon the carrying out of the tenth session. Although spaces served various functions, the overall space was too small for the Community Center’s needs. Limitations of that space in the Arts & Craft necessitated furniture to be moved and the jumble of supplies around the room became additional materials in the child participant’s day-to-day production of responses. Since a prerequisite for eligibility for the child participants had been their concurrent enrollment in the Summer Care Program, I elaborated on the weekday operation of this County-government subsidized recreational camp. Interview highlights from staff members, some of whom were former attendees of the Summer Care Program at this Community Center (or at others in the County) and/or frequenters of the Community Center in their adolescent years, offered first-hand insights regarding the significance of this program for elementary-aged children and the Community Center itself. Even the child participants themselves made known their as affections and discontentments about the Summer Care Program’s offerings of activities. According to
the directors and staff, the Community Center has been integral to the “rich history” of this Neighborhood. Its construction poignantly represented the Neighborhood’s concerted efforts to triumph over a century of marginalization and segregation, and to continue to meet the needs of its diverse patrons who come from all parts of the world.
CHAPTER 6
DATA ANALYSIS

Then is the copy of the figure an incomplete description of my visual experience? No. —But the circumstances decide whether and what, more detailed specifications are necessary—It may be an incomplete description; if there is still something to ask. (Wittgenstein, 1958/1986, p. 199)

In the chapter four I acknowledged my multiple and sometimes concurrent positionalities as researcher, facilitator, participant-observer and my many biases. Implicit subjectivities surely influence my analytic practices too. From the outset I have been immersed “inside” the environment to guide the daily plans of this pragmatic intervention towards the discovery of transactional possibilities during data collection. Contrarily, according to MacLure, disengagement or distancing from the data “involve[s] a forgetting of cultural specificity, singularity, and the dense texture of things and words that are fabricated in people’s everyday encounters with one another” (2013a, p. 170). I was a cultural outsider conducting an ethnographically informed case study. Mindful of the conditions in the environment under which child participants’ novel responses arose, my positionalities allowed me to read not just “with” or “to the outside of” the collected data, but “in” it to open up new ways of thinking about young children’s reading experiences. In keeping with St. Pierre’s (2011; 2015; 2017) writings on “post-qualitative” research, this chapter imparts the gist of my approach to data analysis. Consistent with my bricolage approach, I first recount my analytical experience informed by microethnography. Then, I segue into a reflection on my process of movement from
being-perceptible to becoming-imperceptible that led to unforeseen departures from traditional qualitative research expectations. I conclude this chapter with a detailed explanation of how my multimodal presentation of descriptive findings came to be.

Recognizing that “there is no ‘cookbook’ or single correct way for doing qualitative analysis” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105), I still was careful to avoid cherry-picking. I borrowed from MacLure’s (2010) post-qualitative concept of “glowing data” that attends to re-actualized singularities that command a researcher’s attention. Her strategy better suited not only my voluminous data set, but also fully shouldered this study’s research question (What reading responses emerge through intra-actions between linguistically and culturally diverse children and their environment (setting, culture, and tools) during a pragmatic intervention at an urban community center?). Otherwise, an elaborate, hierarchical open coding scheme intended to sort out temporal brackets of video recordings or interviews by thematic categories would’ve been too laborious for the purposes of completing this study in a timely manner. Inductive coding also would’ve shortchanged that which is best represented multimodally. Inductive coding condenses data to an abridged representation of emerging themes to be codified linguistically while connecting to research objectives. Those categorical patterns across the data set potentially overlook the full spectrum of reader responses noted in the literature review, especially the one-off outliers that have the potential to push the boundaries of possibility. This chapter recounts my ongoing bricolage approach informed by microethnography and post-qualitative data analysis.
Borrowing from Microethnography

While incorporating fine-grain analysis of microbehaviors in a classroom communication event as a way to improve upon ethnographic analysis, Erickson (1975) introduced the term “microethnography” or “ethnographic microanalysis” (Streeck & Mehus, 2005). Distinct from context analysis—an examination of the social relativity of sequentially unfolding, visible, nonverbal behaviors—and conversational analysis—consideration of recurrent verbal phenomena across a range of contexts—microethnography attends to how the social context, i.e., environment that embodies cultural practices in situated social contexts, shapes participants’ meaning-making (Streek & Mehus, 2005). A microethnographically informed approach to data analysis complements case studies and allows me to preserve child reader and environment as mutually constitutive in keeping with the research question and conceptual framework. E.g., a found stack of unused foam lunch trays not only served as impromptu paint palette, but it also became the surface atop monkey traps were erected. Child participants modified used picturebooks that I had curated and made accessible for potential destructive purposes became book monsters or messes. The culture of the Summer Care Program as a place to have fun during the summer months in an out-of-school setting reinforced these repurposings and creative imaginings. Alejandro realized Safaa’s direct suggestion about the inclusion of a habitat for his book monster’s consumption of deconstructed animal figurines. In each of these instances from the data set that are further described in the next chapter, the environmental context (setting, culture, and tools) shaped participants’ responses in mutually constitutive ways.
A microethnographically informed approach to data analysis particularizes the minutiae of “how human realities are produced, activities are conducted, and sense is made by inspecting video recordings of actual events” (p. 382). That reality is unique to the co-constitutive reading transaction under investigation. To enhance understanding of that phenomenon at hand I go beyond the multimodal responses of the child reader to consider his or her situatedness in those interconnected loops of the sociocultural context. All of the child participants are first- or second- generation immigrants from Morocco, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea or Costa Rica that go to the Neighborhood’s Community Center. Findings also indicate that the culture of the Summer Care Program is a confluence of the Community Center’s social history, its adult staff and directors and negotiation of interests competing with that of the neighborhood. Their enthusiasms, inclusivities, and convictions to promote fun and a sense of belonging guided each child’s day-to-day willingness to participate in sessions and to think, communicate, and create beyond the confines of school-based responses to picturebooks. E.g., visitors to the exhibit marveled at the exhibition of creativity. Tamah delighted in her subversion of rethinking affordances as she constructed her own picturebook. At times, Hakim opted to stay in the gymnasium playing group games instead of partaking in the sessions. I layered findings that regard these sociocultural aspects atop the unfolding of child reader responses recorded in session videos. I recognized my direct role in making these connections or linkages between singularities of action and context.

Adding to The Picturebook Project’s bricolage approach, my role as microethnographer was to draw forth the emic perspectives of participants using “whatever is at hand” so as to look for how reader-in-environment-as-a-whole makes
meaning in his or her transactional reading experiences. To remain open to all the possible ways child participants aesthetically responded to metapicturebooks in the context of the study, inclusionary parameters of data under review extended far beyond the verbal language embedded within a temporally-defined microepisode. A range of communicative dimensions evidenced child participants actualizations of new meaning. Data analysis sometimes attended to gaze, facial expressions, body language and posture, hand gestures, and non-verbal utterances as well as physical interactions or behaviors with and within the environment that occurred in the process of meaning-making (Mehus, 2006, p. 73-4; Yin, 2014). From Alejandro’s re-opening of Lehrhaupt’s (2013) Warning: Do Not Open This Book! and the child participants physical shaking of the picturebook in Bryne’s (2014) This Book Just Ate My Dog to Dawit and Alejandro’s gazes at each other while donning with Wearable books, declarations like “I’m a chef” or a lion’s roar, and their pushing and shoving to attempt to jail the other, I regarded all manner of multimodal expressions. In the last of the abovementioned examples, Dawit fashioned a sheriff’s ten-gallon hat and Alejandro wore a mask of a police officer. Both so-called costumes were two-page illustrated spreads of board books with strategically cut notches to comfortable fit the ridge of a nose or eye holes. During this sociodramatic play Wearable book and child reader became a whole greater than the sum of its constituent parts. My data analysis of this microepisode as recorded on video attended to all manner of multimodal communications—gesture, gaze, body position and/or physical stance as well as utterances and verbal language. The unfolding presentation of their outward, multimodal expressions indicated observable re-actualizations, i.e., their co-constructions of meaning potentials that emerged within this particular interpretive community and environment.
Those re-actualizations to which I attended in my data analysis emerged from their symbiotic subject-object turn from “being-perceptible” or perceiving that which is known to “becoming-imperceptible” or perceiving the known and unknown (actual or virtual) as they encounter new meaning making possibilities. This comprehensive approach makes visible reader responses that emerged during The Picturebook Project.

In a bounded case study that examines teacher candidate’s choice to share three picturebooks with varying degrees of culturally diverse representations of characters and settings to introduce the mathematical concept of exponents, researchers chose a microethnographic approach “to study specific phenomenon in educational spaces in order to observe and analyze teacher practices and student learning” (Leonard, Moore & Brooks, 2014, p. 330). By chunking of their collected data into 15- to 20-minute microepisodes of teaching, the researchers’ segmented heuristic units of study to reflectively analyze the implementation of a culturally responsive pedagogy in mathematics instruction. Of course, case studies are already temporally bounded but those parameters would’ve been too unwieldy to be considered the smallest unit of study that can be perceived and interpreted without supplementation of other pieces of information beyond the context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345 qtd. in Merriam, 2009, p. 177). I am disinclined to delimit re-actualizations to an arbitrary length of time. In one example of the “glowing data” responsive to the research question, Dawit and Alejandro’s sociodramatic play with Wearable books in which they donned masks, beards, and hats lasted less than ten minutes. On a prior day, Alejandro engaged in creating his response to Lehrhaupt’s (2014) Warning: Do Not Open This Book for nearly forty minutes. Video recordings of child participants’ verbal contributions to Tell Me
framework questions recorded anchor charts lasted mere seconds. Like Goldilocks visit to the three bears cottage in which she discovers porridge that was too hot, too cold, and then just right, I determined increments of twenty or forty minutes would be too long of a duration and mere seconds would be too short to fully capture a reading response in its entirety. Constant chunks of either of those amounts of time would’ve been ineffective and inefficient. Singularities are atemporal, so segmentation of data into time-based units would’ve contradicted this study’s conceptual framework.

To reassess how to define which microepisodic unit of analysis would be just right for this study, I reconsidered other criteria to meaningfully segment data into microepisodes representative of the transactional reading experiences under review. Given the array of multimodal communicative dimensions, hands-on and playful actions, and produced artwork that constitute the collected data, I initially segmented the data by child participant and/or metapicturebook. But that excepted the interpretive community and other cultural tools in the environment. Re-looking across the data, some reader responses like Misrak and Etimad sharing of ideas and problem-solving in their complex construction of a monkey trap or Hakim’s reluctance to attend each session stood out as distinctive one-offs, but I struggled to account for their conspicuousness. I intuited that these reflected each child’s *joie de vivre* (or lack thereof) in the power of these creative becomings and differences. Apprehensive of defining the unit of analysis by what I infer seemed to me like putting the proverbial cart before the horse. Distancing myself, I then contemplated delineating process- and product-oriented representative data, such as children’s material artifacts as well as unrehearsed sequences of sociodramatic play as
units of analysis. But those boundaries, like the previous iteration, were akin to subject-object dichotomies.

Returning to my prior intuition, I soon recognized that throughout these efforts I continually gravitated towards certain reader responses that were unparalleled in relation to others and unique unto themselves. During each sifting through of the entirety of the data I returned to Tamah’s statements about her transactions with *metapicturebooks* or Dawit and Alejandro’s sociodramatic play or Hakim’s reluctance or Misrak and Etimad’s back-and-forth conversation while contrasting monkey traps? While each of these and others piqued my analytical curiosity and concurrently addressed my research objective, they also defied exacting definitions for they were contingent the confluence of environmental factors and unique to the child reader within that particular interpretive community. At first blush, to say that I just know a microepisode when I feel a certain way seems to trivialize the analytical process. Nor did I intend for these microepisodes to be summarized as indicators exacting aesthetic reading experiences. Sipe (2008) provided descriptions of performative and transparent verbal responses that included specific examples of what they may be to distinguish them from analytical, intertextual, or personal ones. At the time, his furnishing of descriptors and examples helped educators and literacy specialists or those reading his book to better recognize occurrences of aesthetic responses. For the purposes of data analysis, forcing predetermined and prescribed units of study smacked of *nihil ad rem pertinent*. Rather, findings that arise from my data analysis remain unfixed. They extend beyond what was or what happened to contemplate re-actualizations of child readers’ becomings, their multimodal
expressions of meaning potentials that emerged from the child reader-in-the-environment-as-a-whole.

**Borrowing from Post-Qualitative Research**

Data analysis started long before the conclusion of the last session of The Picturebook Project. I listened to every audio recorded interview before uploading the digital file to a transcription service. Upon return receipt, I re-listened to each audio file alongside its transcript to ensure accuracy. I watched every video recording of each session as I transferred files from the digital camcorders to hard drives. On my commutes to/from the research site I spoke aloud in my car to my iPhone’s “Siri” to record train-of-thought reflective memos. As I collected data during my visits to the Community Center and thereafter, I underwent multiple rounds of reading and re-reading of observational fieldnotes, transcripts, and memos, viewing and re-viewing video recordings of sessions and photographs, listening and re-listening to audio recordings. I sought to make sense of the data in a way that directly addresses my research question. As chapter four describes, I acknowledged my subjective entanglements and my prior relations to the participants and research site. Even so, my preliminary analysis relied too heavily on my preconceived notions about literacy practices and simplification of evidentiary interpretations. Those combined efforts seemed contrary to the spirit of this study; and so, in my continued methodological readings and ongoing reflections, I stumbled upon resolution in post-qualitative research that bypasses such conceptualizations.
“Hot Spots” as Affective Cues for “Glowing Data” Analysis

In early November while reviewing data to present as my preliminary findings at an upcoming job talk, I noticed that I repeatedly came back to the same sampling of video clips, child participant’s photographs, and excerpts of transcripts and audio recordings that made me buzz with excitement as I pondered emerging implications. Those data selections were somehow distinctive. After subsequent months of deliberation, I began to appreciate them as singularities unlike each other, and unlike the remaining data’s absence of that electricity, my joie de vivre. I had unknowingly attended to “hot spots” that are often precluded from immediate rationalization, assigned inconsequence, or discounted because of perceived superficiality (MacLure, 2011). But I hadn’t assigned such perceptions for they were incomparable to other collected data. Rather, these one-offs or singularities repeatedly piqued my interests. MacLure conceptualizes “hot spots” in her Deleuzian scholarship on research methodologies; she writes,

These gut feelings point to the existence of embodied connections with others that are far more complex, and potentially more wondrous, than the static connections that we often assume between self and other, researcher and researched. (2011, p. 1004).

Those indefinable openings in my data analysis arrested my gaze, made me press pause or rewind and, most especially, generated an emerging feeling of wonder or even discomfort about the “untapped potential” of a wistful comment, creative use of material, comical expression, or unconventional act of book handling (MacLure, 2013b; 2013a).
These “hot spots” signaled my microepisodes. Using reflective memos, charts, scribblings on Post-It notes and marginalia, I again culled through the entirety of the data to flag each meaning potential that gave me pause and had me teetering along the lines of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics, that is, in a liminal space between “knowing and unknowing” as I attempted to make sense of these singularities (MacLure, 2013b, p.228). My eventual curation of what MacLure terms “glowing data” reflects my affective re-actualizations of child participant’s re-actualizations offered in the data selections on which I recursively meditate.

Resisting preconceptions of what I should see or be looking for during analysis, “hot spots” signaled singularities re-actualized as simulations that comprised my “glowing data” and emerged in unpredictable and unsystematic ways. It commanded my attention. MacLure (2010) illustrates what happens when a researcher encounters “glowing data”:

…connections start to fire up: the conversation gets faster and more animated as we begin to recall other incidents and details in the project classrooms, our own childhood experiences, films or artwork that we have seen, articles that we have read. And it is worth noting in passing that there is an affective component (in the Deleuzian sense) to this emergence of the example. The shifting speeds and intensities of engagement with the example do not just prompt thought, but also generate sensations resonating in the body as well as the brain – frissons of excitement, energy, laughter, silliness. (p. 282)
Affective intensities gripped me because the “glowing data” bore no analogous resemblance to “reason” as it is the medium of representation mediated as difference through identity, analogy, opposition, and resemblance (Deleuze, 1990, p. 29). As explained in chapter two, these haecceities are not individualizations, but individuations that manifest indefiniteness. They’re a concurrence of actual and virtual. Musings about “glowing data” that centered on intra-actions between haecceities happened on two levels of transaction: (1) child reader and environment; and (2) researcher and researched. Just as the child participants transacted with metapicturebooks in a particular environment, I transacted with the multimodal data to contemplate the possible meaning potentials. Instead of merely recounting what was as an expanded definition of aesthetic responses, this study’s findings as re-actualizations also contemplate the possibilities of what may be, but not yet is. Metaphorically speaking, it offers stepping stones from which I hop, skip, or jump to other imaginings of what transactional reading experiences might emerge given a certain environment and particular child readers.

First, data analysis attended to unfolding manifestations of Sipe’s “aesthetic impulse” during The Picturebook Project’s sessions. For example, Alejandro continued being one with the storyworld after my read aloud of Lehrhaupt’s (2013) Warning: Do Not Open This Book! concluded. He reopened the front cover and blurted out, “I let the monkeys out again!” To which Lydia subsequently shimmied across the floor to inspect their unanticipated liberation. Second, stepping away from a deficit-model of reading that I formerly assumed as a classroom teacher, allowed for open-ended and ceaseless ponderings about the data. I could engage in active sense making. In listening to, reading, watching, or beholding the data, I was perceptible. I used my senses to make meaning
from the actual data. But in the flow of becoming-imperceptible I unconsciously contemplated the virtual, the possibilities of what else may be beyond a deficit model, but not yet is. Those become the invisible threads that connect singularities, not a definable grouping, but as an influence or inspiration or motivation or affect that I re-actualized to make known as a possibility of the child participants’ transactional process. For example, instead of a mere description of Alejandro’s monkey trap as he explained it in conversation, I make connections other seemingly unrelated snippets of data from survey responses, interviews, and child photographs to contemplate the possibility of exercising agency when given the freedom of such an environment. Those connections related to autonomy aren’t intended to be indicators of a new reading model, but ponderings about other meaning potentials that widen reading practices. Each data set may be rearranged or other singularities of “glowing data” substituted to yield other yet to be known meaning potentials. This study merits consideration of those differences between the known and unknown that arise from this analytical ebb and flow. My re-actualizations ruptured my perceptions about young children’s reader responses to yield new insights about creative transactional possibilities. Along this process, singularities that emerged as connections to other singularities, not for the reason that there existed shared commonalities, but rather for the unfolding of becoming-imperceptible that happened at once and virtually.

**Multimodal Presentation of “Glowing Data”**

When coding is a strategy to construct grounded theory, traditional qualitative researchers look for emerging patterns, common discursive threads or categories to
crystallize what is learned from the data collected in the study (Charmaz, 2014). Attempts to reduce “glowing data” into such schemes of static representation vexed me. As mentioned earlier, I couldn’t neglect those singularities occasioned in this study. Alejandro’s imaginative monkey trap creation was unlike any other child participant in his use of art materials, “loose parts,” and extension of the storyworld. However, this “glowing data” wasn’t intended to be evidence of comparative differences between Alejandro and the reading responses of other child participants. Such a line of inquiry fell outside my stated research objectives. After all, I hadn’t conceptualized child readers and/or environs as “already stabilized entities” being in “opposition” to one another (MacLure, 2013b, p. 228). I preferred to envision analysis of “glowing data” as an interminable practice of sense-making to shed light on a broad spectrum of transactional possibilities relating to aesthetic experiences. That creation of a monkey trap raised more questions than could have been answered (and it continues to do so). In the preceding chapter, I adopted a more traditional write-up to communicate data about the sociocultural context of this study. The next chapter advances a more innovative style that embodies the process of discerning “glowing data” and its innumerable and unanticipated connections to other singularities of data.

Vignettes are one of many rhetorical devices in an ethnographer’s toolkit. Incorporation of vivid dialogue in thickly written narrative descriptions creates verisimilitude and generates for readers the feelings and events of a specific culture that the ethnographer experienced (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989; Ponterotto, 2006). In writing up a case study, Merriam (2009) remarks, not only are “detailed descriptions of particulars” necessary for the reader to “vicariously experience the setting of the study,”
but it must also maintain a “sense of immediacy” (p. 258, 262). In the prior chapter, thick description aimed to transport readers to (1) Arts & Craft Room and (2) Summer Care Program at the (3) Community Center located in a (4) Neighborhood within a Mid-Atlantic city’s greater metropolitan area. To provide ample contextual background for the subsequent descriptive findings of “glowing data” in chapter seven, I briefly traced critical pieces of evidence that situated sociohistorical beliefs about literacy and education as well cultural circumstances relevant to this study. According to Yin (2014), for case studies to be complete and exemplary attention must be given to the boundaries distinguishing phenomena—the intervention—and the sociocultural context. And so, I presented descriptive evidence of these boundaries and acknowledged prospective limitations as plausible research constraints.

If a picture is said to be worth a thousand words, I questioned consignment of my data analysis to linguistic representations as I wrote up my findings. Pertinent multimodal communicative dimensions included, but are not limited to facial expressions, gestures, inarticulations, photographs and video still frames. Given this array I had to be prudent in the multimodal presentation of “glowing data” as findings. To MacLure (2013a), data analysis is akin to “the ongoing construction of a cabinet of curiosities” (p. 180). Exhibition of data in such a manner embraces the known happenings and re-actualizations of meaning potentials and unknown ones yet to be re-actualized and perceived. It has the potential to beget discoveries, connections, and inquiries that can be, but aren’t yet known. I guided my curation of only the most germane reader responses that heralded affective intensities, both mine and child participants.
To convey these ever-expanding connections that I re-constructed from among the “glowing data,” I employed the conjunction “AND” prior to the “was” of any multimodal expressions of perceived actions, states, or qualities by predicate or re-actualized creations of meaning (Rajchman, 2000, p. 56). AND marked an increasing flow of affective intensities between singularities that have been multimodally re-actualized in my process’s (or that of the child participant’s) movement between states as creative meaning potentials were unleashed. AND connects singularities in rhizomatic ways. In problematizing the representation of modernist thought, Deleuze supposes a different grammar by his employment of AND in order to be unburdened from “questions of ‘ontological determination’ (or saying what there is)” (Rajchman, 2000, p. 56). Lastly an ellipsis (…) indicated the relative potential for limitless expansion of “glowing data” in unanticipated ways. Each rhizome represents one so-called curiosity that I curated. There are no entrypoints nor exits. Linear sequences have been omitted. Chapter seven contains seven selections of “glowing data” as open-ended rhizomes that constitute my cabinet of curiosities. These rhizomatic “glowing data” sets are my re-actualizations, my sense-making of The Picturebook Project to address not only the reader responses that emerge, but also the significance of the process of creating and imagining within a particular environment. To emphasize the fluidity of singularities that occur in aesthetic reading transactions, I deliberately avoid reducing them to a topic, theme, or category.
CHAPTER 7
CURATION OF CHILD READER RESPONSES

The setting of The Picturebook Project was much more than just a room at a summer camp. The complex interplay of sociohistorical and cultural forces and spatial limitations contextualized the environment. This study’s research question has been purposefully crafted to wonder about the ways in which child reader and environment intra-acted during transactional reading experiences. Their reader responses, of course, focused on a set of metapicturebooks and particular open-ended materials that comprised part of this environment. This chapter presents a curation of multimodal reader responses that have been expressed as singularities, that is, one-offs unlike all the rest. This “glowing data” beguiled me while setting in motion ever-expanding connections to other intriguing singularities. Consistent with the children’s creative subversions that disrupted the hegemony of print as well as selection of metapicturebooks that offer unconventional affordances, I, too, have resisted the transmediation of this “glowing data” into a primarily linguistic format expected of a write-up of qualitative research as a dissertation. I incorporate visual re-actualizations.

Each curiosity of “glowing data” that teetered in liminality space between known and unknown evoked creative meaning potentials produced during transactional reading experiences in sessions of The Picturebook Project. My curated “cabinet of curiosities” is visually presented over a series of pages (MacLure, 2013a). As a haecceity, anywhere on any page served as my access to “glowing data” at any given time for there was neither
beginning nor end of this rhizomatic and multimodal re-representation. The importance of this curation had been ascertained by that which commanded my attention and made me wonder in ceaseless ways, for that became what this “glowing data” bid me to do.

To minimize visual clutter of this rhizomatic curation, I’ve color-coded the text boxes based on the data source. Light green indicates one-on-one interview. Light purple speech balloons are transcriptions of my spoken words from a session of The Picturebook Project. Light yellow is a transcription of child participant’s spoken words during a session or back-and-forth dialogue. Text in a light blue box is from my reflective fieldnotes. Text in a pink box with an arrow is my transcription of a child’s writing with some grammatical changes for clarity. Light orange boxes are responses from survey cards to the questions posed. To distinguish between my photographs, those of the child participants, and still frames of video recordings, the borders of those images are black, red, and blue respectively. I notate which day in parenthesis, e.g. (3) means third session, except (E) signifies exhibit. As explained in chapter six, to indicate the ever-expanding connections between singularities that have yet to come, I employ ellipses. Connections that I’ve already made between singularities are indicated with bidirectional arrows, plus the conjunction AND. To clarify connections between unclassified singularities or to pose further questions, brief, yet descriptive commentary follows each multimodal re-actualization of “glowing data.”
Figure 7-1: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on fun while reading.

On the topic of good readers...
Tamah: ...they read a lot, and they write about what they read. They comprehend or "remember about the book." Here, she adds in her interview, "We're...creating stuff based on the book." Compared to school, creating is "more fun." She later explains, "And the homework I don't really remember any of it. I don't comprehend. But on the...the projects when you create...I can remember lots of stuff of it. 'Cause it's fun.

Nuru: "Umm, I'm looking forward to like, read a lot because when I go to third grade, I wanna be good, like a good reader, just like in, first grade.
Laura: You were a good reader this year, in first grade?
Nuru: Yeah, I was in level 16.
Laura: What makes a good reader?
Nuru: "Umm, because like my, my dad, he's good reading, so like he has this chart, like, umm, a strategy chart. So, then when I get stuck in a word, umm, he help, he tells, he doesn't help me until I figure it out, then he gives me a piece of sheet paper then I have to write the word a lot of times.
Laura: And that helps you remember it?
Nuru: And then... Yeah, and then I have to say it and write it.

Laura: What are some things that you're doing?
Nuru: Using a button, wiggling the pages, pressing, pressing dots.

Like... some movies, you can, they let you umm, press stuff.
“It’s fun when you like do things.”—Tamah

Eight-year-old Tamah, an aspiring teacher and doctor, was a rising third grader at my former elementary school. Tamah was bilingual, she speaks both Amharic and English. From her interview, I ascertained her confidence as a reader in English, for she stated that she didn’t know how to read in Amharic. Tamah knew that she was a reader because she had “high levels on reading” as per her “report paper” that indicated she was reading “above third grade.” In a similar manner, Nuru, a bilingual rising second grader who spoke both Arabic and English, measured being a “good reader” by a leveled number that she has attained.

Diagnostic Reading Assessment® (DRA) is intended to be a formative reading assessment according to its publisher Pearson. Many Kindergarten to second grade (K-2) teachers in the County public elementary schools (myself included) rely on it as a summative measurement of beginning of the year (BOY), end of first- (Q1) and second-quarter (Q2), and end of the year (EOY) benchmarks to demonstrate gains. This evidence not only supports teacher’s yearly evaluations, but also the school-wide improvement plan that establishes reading goals. The understanding is that reaching benchmarks in K-2 boosts the likelihood that the elementary school will achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on state assessments in grades 3-5. See Table 7-1 as an example of a spreadsheet that tracked my former first graders progress.⁹ To be considered on-grade level by EOY, first graders at my former elementary school had to demonstrate an

---

⁹ For anonymity, I have removed any identifiable information about students.
independent reading level of 16 in both fiction and nonfiction. That means, 95% accuracy in oral reading fluency and 90% accuracy in comprehension as formulated by a rubric.

Table 7-1: Report of reading goals for teacher evaluation based on DRA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K DRA</th>
<th>BOY</th>
<th>End of Q1</th>
<th>Met Q1 Goal, Goal, Target</th>
<th>End of Q2</th>
<th>Met Q2 Goal, Target</th>
<th>EOY</th>
<th>Met EOY Goal, Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>moved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16F, 18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>moved</td>
<td>moved</td>
<td>moved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, Above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, On</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Nuru, a “good reader” in first grade has reached the level 16 benchmark. The reading strategies that she mentioned in her interview were those which help her to decode unknown words with accuracy and speed to reach this benchmark. To achieve full points on the comprehension rubric, a certain quantity and quality of either text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connections has to be verbalized. Fiction retellings must include the beginning, middle, or end of the story as well as problem and solution and a sufficient amount of details. Connecting words between the narrative sequence of events are expected too. And so, I wonder if there had been connection between Nuru’s understanding of reading as reflected by leveling and task-oriented
activities, and her dependency on Misrak to make a monster for her. How much autonomy did Nuru experience in her prior responses to picturebooks, especially those that diverge from structured retellings? The only difference between Misrak’s original monster and the one that she made for Nuru, was a change of eyes owing to a low supply of googly eyes. Otherwise, Misrak came up with the idea to glue the monster to a second-hand book and to decapitate the duck’s head. Because Nuru had a conflict of summer school to remediate her reading in the mornings, she was only able to join The Picturebook Project on three occasions. I wonder what would’ve happened if she attended more sessions. Would Nuru have initiated her own creative makings?

Tamah loves reading stories. Later in her interview she explained the steps to respond to books, “I would first tell the characters, and then the problem and solutions and the plot.” While Tamah had an understanding of fictional narrative structures, I wonder how much guided reading assessments and DRA have influenced her structural knowledge about reading. Between her interview with me and our impromptu chat during the ninth session, Tamah expanded on her description of fun noted in her interview with me outside of The Picturebook Project’s sessions. Both the process of creating and, as she says, “doing” were action-based. She exercised autonomy in choosing how to proceed in her actions. From the “glowing data” in Figure 7-1, I wonder if her comparison between metapicturebooks and other ones that, perhaps, she may read to comprehend in school or for homework, was a contemplation about passivity or activity during reading and/or afterwards. Was she referring to the difference between efferent and aesthetic stances? As seen in figure 7-1, Tamah’s younger sister Lydia, a rising second-grader, chimed into the conversation. I wonder, might Lydia have been describing a tablet device? Or, perhaps
the selection menu on a DVD? Both of these possibilities seem to attend to the agency of a reader (or movie-goer) in the selection of what to do or what to watch.
Figure 7-2: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on cooperation.

(3) Alejandro to me: “Because this looks like a whale and that, it need water.”

(3) Safaa to Alejandro: Make it a little habitat... Like make it with some grass, some rocks.

(4) Conversation Etimad (R) & Misrah (L):
E: What’re you doing?
M: Oh, I’m making a trap.
E: What are those?
M: Oh, so like rocks for a pond.
E: Are you gonna get some paper?
M: No, I’m just thinking rocks.
E: I know, but what’s gonna be the water?
M: Water? Oh, I’m putting a little blue paper across.
E: But why didn’t you put the paper first?
M: Because water is on top of rocks.
Exploring Possibilities Through Cooperation and Sharing

In figure 7-2, video still frames show Etimad approaching Misrak during the fourth session to ask about why she was using colored glass beads. From their conversation transcribed from audio recordings, Misrak was taken aback by Etimad’s interest and gazes directly at her when saying, “Oh, so like rocks for a pond.” She continued to explain her design of a trap to catch the monkeys that escaped from Lehrhaupt’s (2013) *Warning: Do Not Open This Book!* Etimad was especially curious about the order in which she was layering materials to construct the pond. To which Misrak explained her reasoning. In this process, both girls gestured with their hands to indicate their prospective ideas for the design.

After this conversation, Etimad started to construct her own monkey trap atop a blank gessoed hardboard panel. She also included a pond but intended to have alligators swimming in hers. In sharing her vision with Misrak, Etimad anticipated painting her “rocks.” In turn, that spawned an idea for Misrak to paint her rocks too. Both split a foam tray of assorted paint colors. As the video still frame in the lower left corner of the page shows, Misrak also tried to add light blue felt, but in her finished product as seen in one of my photographs from the exhibit, she opted to just construct her pond from layers of mixed paints atop the glass beads or “rocks.” In Etimad, Misrak, and Alejandro’s processes of responding to these *metapicturebooks*, cooperation among this “interpretive community” of child participants pushed their imaginings to new heights as they shared in the exploration of creative possibilities.
Connected to this collaboration is another video still frame and one-off conversational excerpt. In the session prior to Misrak and Etimad’s conversation, Safaa offered a suggestion to Alejandro to add a habitat for his animals featured in his “monster” book. Alejandro listened to Safaa attentively but did not offer a verbal reply at the time. However, minutes later, with a blue marker Alejandro added a pool of water to the corner of an end page of a picturebook on which an animal figurine cut in half with an added whale tale had been glued. That water also covered up the handwritten inscription of the name and year from whom the second-hand picturebook had previously been gifted. Safaa’s suggestion was the first mention of “habitat” in any of the sessions. I wonder if that was overheard by Misrak and it initiated her thinking about the possibility of constructing jungle-like habitat the next day. For her elaboration of a trap goes beyond white backdrop of Lehrhaupt’s (2013) Warning: Don Not Open This Book. Or if the available loose parts in combination with the metapicturebook had been her inspiration for building a three-dimensional jungle habitat in which to trap the monkey.
Figure 7-3: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on experimentation.
Experimentation with “Loose Parts” and Problem-solving

The “glowing data” in figure 7-3 presents an abundance of connections. Each child participant’s creative responses varied. No two were alike. More possibilities for responses could’ve been imagined than what was made. As indicated in earlier chapters, the available loose parts and visual art supplies as well as found materials around the Arts & Craft Room, such as foam lunch trays, in combination with the metapicturebooks and social setting comprised the environment in which the child participants had been situated. This multimodal re-representation of “glowing data” also inquired into the boundless configurations of loose parts as aesthetic expressions. Through trial and error, revisions, and collaborations, the children experimented with the materials.

Starting at the twelve o’clock position, Alejandro cut in half a plastic animal figurine of what appears to be a Central American spider monkey and affixed an orca tail as its hind quarters. By testing the sizes of front half and back half of those animals in which he cut apart and those in which he was unable, Alejandro experimented with which animal part affix to another. To him, this monkey-whale hybrid is one of many, for his book monster eats not only people like that of Perry’s (2009) The Book That Eats People, but also eats animals too. In the process of eating, he explained to me during the third session, “the book makes animals go together.” Moving in clockwise direction, the squiggles of lines were Alejandro’s testing of oil pastel crayon colors. His preferred choices were selected to scribble in picturebook as part of his subversive act. I noticed Alejandro’s broad smile as he scribbled and asked him to “tell me what you’re thinking
when you’re doing that.” He giggled. He knew that his teachers would’ve never let him engage in such a subversive act. See photograph of Alejandro in figure 7-9.

The next two sets of images show the excessive amounts of glue and tape that were used to hold together loose parts so as to make them more permanent. Dousing her sculptural revisions to Eoin Colfer’s (2001) *Artemis Fowl* in craft glue, Etimad proclaimed, “Today we’re gonna waste a lot of glue.” Later she voiced concern that the glue’s opaqueness ruined her subversion of a chapter book she recognized from school but detested. Needless to say, upon seeing that her copious amount of glue dried clear, she was relieved. The same could not be said for Safaa’s attempts to construct a vertical wall of crayons from which to build a house. Her overuse of glue made the cluster of crayons adhere to the foam tray. Upon lifting them off of the tray, a few broke apart. To problem solve, she then experimented by gluing the crayons upright.

Next is Tamah’s photograph of Etimad experimenting with paint colors. When Etimad initially encountered the paints, she was taken aback that no water was needed, except for washing the brushes to clean them. When other students went to select paints, she informed them that no water is needed. I wonder if her only prior experience with painting had been with watercolors or the like. During the construction of her monkey trap, she became fascinated with the viscosity of acrylic paints. She swirled and mixed new colors. Then, she’d check the tray to see how the paint dried the next day. This experimentation informed her choice of mixed colors to paint her monkey trap’s pond. The dimensionality of Etimad’s trap involved an assortment of mixed materials. In addition to paint, glass beads, corks, and dried moss, she also constructed a mountain from “quick” dry clay. But her sun raised in the imaginary sky above the trap is what had
caught my immediate attention. With Misrak’s help, she made this sun from two wooden spools, two wooden coffee stirrers—one of which Etimad cut with scissors to shorten—and a flat wooden circle. In constructing this sun, Etimad would retrieve various loose parts and discuss with Misrak how to assemble them to add height. Misrak had the idea of jamming a stirrer inside a spool. But Etimad worried about the weight of the circular “sun” and sturdiness of the stirrers, so she trimmed the height of one. The video still shot shows both girls with their hands on the top stirrer attempting to steady its attachment to the second spool. Eventually, Etimad painted the entire contraption yellow.

At the end of the fifth session, upon completion of his monkey trap, Alejandro immediately went to work on a new creation of his own imaginative design. He collected an assortment of wooden pieces, namely cubes and circular disks as well as other loose parts like glass beads and started to experiment with how to stack them atop a gessoed panel. Deciding on an order of stacking, he glued each stack. The next day, as the video still frame shows, he started a gluing assembly line to continue to reproduce these stacks. His next step was to arrange these stacks, then paint some of them as well as the surface of the panel. Curious about his creation-in-the-making, I inquired, “What are you making?” To which Alejandro immediately responded without looking up, “senseis” (see center photograph in figure 7-7). He proceeded to explain to me that they do karate. I followed up to ask if he was telling a story, Alejandro said “yes.” Although the story hadn’t yet been fully fleshed out, I could observe his unremitting focus in constructing these sensei figures. I wondered if, to him the gessoed panel represented the blank page of book? Were the “sensei” figures like pop-up characters in a picturebook, but moveable? Of note, while waiting for the paint to dry, he revisited that day’s read-aloud
selection, Pett’s (2016) *This Is My Book!*. He pulled the blank book out of the pocket in the back end-pages. Using a red permanent marker, he copied that metapicturebook’s words onto the pages (see figure 7-6). He acted with intention.

Lastly, I noticed that Tamah faced a dilemma as she experimented with materials to make her vision of a monkey trap a reality. In reviewing the video recordings from the fourth session, I noticed that she stuck her forearm beneath the top of the monkey trap, or tan felt, to lift it up as seen in the larger of the still frames. Structurally, her use of pipe cleaners had been insufficient to keep the felt trap raised in an open position. It was too top-heavy. In setting up the Arts & Craft Room for each session, I put each of the child participant’s works-in-progress on a table until the child indicated completion. For two days, I put that monkey trap on a table as Tamah had yet to inform me otherwise. Tamah returned to her monkey trap on the sixth day. She removed one of the pipe-cleaners and added two coffee stirrers that she had taped together with blue removable masking tape. Of all the possible solutions, she created a lean-to. In photographing her finished monkey trap, I noticed another supporting double-stirrer had been added. I wonder at what moment did Tamah become satisfied with her solution. Had it been a matter of matching her imagined trap with the reality of what she constructed? Did her reassessment of the trap after a weekend allow her to “see” the possibilities with a fresh pair of eyes? Or had she reconsidered how the available materials might be handled in such a way to allow for a solution?
Figure 7-4: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on frustration.

(2) AND

My monster has rows of teeth. His defense is like a skunk. Roar he breathe fire.

(1) How do you feel about talking about a book you just read?

(3) AND

How do you feel about creating artwork, like sculpture, painting, or drawing to tell a story?

(4) AND

Hakim: That idea’s too hard. Umm, you would say...what is the main idea of this story? And I like try to think of it in my head, like if I wanted to read, b- j, I wanted to read, um, you know this book but I couldn’t....

Me: ...what about the books we were looking at? Did we have to think of the main idea of any of those books?

Hakim: No.

Me: Did you enjoy them? [Hakim nods to affirm...] Tell me about that.

Hakim: And I really like how, I really like...It looks like the characters, umm, the characters talking but the, umm, the illustrated good, and then the author, uh, the author is, um, writing, umm, and talking for him. Like for the character.

(5) AND

(5) During the session, he didn’t want to create anything. He just wanted to explore the metapicturebooks and talk about them. I think he took in others’ works-in-progress too. Then, he left.

(5) (E)

This book has a scary monster inside. It lives next to the pond. It like to swim.

This is the monster’s cave. He hangs out all the time.
“That idea’s [sic] too hard.”—Hakim

Hakim was a bilingual rising fourth-grader. While interviewing him in the Music Room, the sight of the audio recorder gave him some apprehension. So, I suggested that he only press “record” button when he was ready. In the meantime, we just talked. From that conversation, as written in my fieldnotes, I learned that to Hakim, “school is boring” and “too much work.” He shared his aspiration to be a doctor when he grows up because his mom told him doctors make a lot of money. Hakim would send that money back to his family—his parents and brother—in Sudan. I noticed that he appears to be of two minds, for he loved to play group sports and games, especially at P.E. at school and in the gymnasium at Summer Care Program, but also recognized his responsibilities. Whether its grades on a report card or meeting behavioral expectations, Hakim carried an invisible pressure upon himself to be “good” in school and at the Community Center. To what degree he placed that pressure upon himself or it came from various external sociocultural forces, I was unsure. In the recorded part of his interview, he explained his initial disappointment, then progress, and success in writing. He stated,

I- I like- I like writ- I like it pretty good and cause- cause when I- when I start school like, fail grade, I really start- start... I really, uh, str- I struggled of writing, and then now, when they start doing cursive, I start writing...I started writing cursive, like, I wrote bad, and then each day I- I- I, um, am half good, and then the other day I’m starting to do a lot good.
The ”other day” to which Hakim referred was when he wrote in cursive about his monster. That finished page, as seen in the top left photograph of figure 7-4, did not come easily for him.

Preceding the launch of The Picturebook Project’s first “CREATE!” activity during the second session, I prompted the child participants to collectively brainstorm monster ideas (see figure 4-5). To sketch out an idea if they so choose, blank, half-page books were made available to them. Hakim took one of those books. After four minutes of contemplation and writing his initials on the cover and a title, “The Book of Monster,” he asked me for how much longer we are to do this activity. I shared the time, about 45 minutes remained and if he didn’t finish, he’d be able to continue the next day. I also complimented his “fancy” writing. A few minutes later, I saw his hand raised in the air. I acknowledged him and let him know that this isn’t a classroom. It isn’t a school. That he also had the choice to “just call out for me, say ‘Miss Laura!’” Hakim had wished for clarification of the directions, specifically, if he had to draw and where he was to put his monster. I encouraged him to create his monster anywhere and in anyway (mode) he chooses. He wanted to know if could draw lines across the interior page of blank book to guide his handwriting. To which I replied, “Do whatever you want. If that sounds like a good idea to you, then it’s for me too.” All this time his tablemate, Dawit had been busily creating his monster and giving a soliloquy, descriptors like “big eyes,” “a fin, and it runs fast” could be heard on the audio recordings. I’m unsure if Dawit’s self-talk was audible to Hakim.

After seven minutes had elapsed, Hakim reached the point in his writing in which his attempts to spell s-k-u-n-k started to frustrate him. Hakim looked across the table at
Dawit and leaned closer to him as if to ask a question. Before he could say anything, Dawit exclaimed, “Stop it! I’m tryin’ to work! Focus. Focus on your work, man.” Hakim’s brief response was inaudible. Dawit replied to him, “Whatever. I don’t want to talk to you.” In exasperation, Hakim clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth and exhaled. Dawit retorted, “Whatever, I can’t hear you. My ears are dry.” About twenty minutes later when Hakim had finished writing and was in the middle of drawing his monster, he snatched an animal figure from Dawit (see middle top of video still frame in figure 7-4). I wonder about the motivation of Hakim’s actions. Had his action been in retaliation of Dawit’s earlier remarks? Had he acted out of frustration in comparing himself to Dawit? Dawit fashioned his monster with purpose and at a brisk pace. What could easily be characterized as slow progress, I wonder if, instead, Hakim was at an impasse. He often looked up from his work-in-progress to survey others around the room. I wonder if Hakim’s interview statement “that idea’s [sic] too hard” may be indicative of any difficulty that this open-ended response posed, for there lacked any template or sample of a monster for him to follow. Perhaps, his impasse was the disparity he felt in accommodating this activity to what he knew about school as a comparison. To what degree had his possible frustration or impasse influenced his decision to not partake in sessions three and four?

Hakim departed session three shortly after the icebreaker. He indicated his desire to return to the gymnasium to continue to play games with the Summer Care Program. I assured him that his decision is alright by me and he is always welcome to come back to The Picturebook Project. Upon arrival to the Community Center the next day, Hakim saw me in the lobby as I was shuffling back-and-forth between the Arts & Craft Room and
Music Room to gather the necessary materials to set-up for the fourth session. Tugging at my shirtsleeve, he got my attention, and I smiled at him. But he looked forlorn and explained that because of his arm, he couldn’t participate in The Picturebook Project. No longer able to write or hold a writing utensil, Hakim dangled his right arm limply. I asked him to check in with me tomorrow about how his arm heals. The morning of the fifth session as I noted in my reflective fieldnotes, I went into the Multipurpose Room to get an update from Hakim. For a split second he had forgotten about his injured arm, but he assured me it was on the mend. I shared the fifth session’s agenda with him, and he appeared quite excited about the prospect of exploring new metapicturebook titles. Though I speculated about the cause of his avoidance and, perhaps, anxiety or shyness at the time, I didn’t want to pry as that had the potential to further deter him. Rather, I affirmed his feelings, reinforced his open invitation to join The Picturebook Project, and left the decision up to him.

The portrait-oriented still frame near the center of figure 7-4 reflects Hakim’s engaged self-selected reading during the fifth session. Aware of his feelings of frustration when talking about books from the Emoji Game, I approached Hakim to ask what he thought of Olien’s (2016) The Blobfish Book. He expressed his enjoyment and pointed out the self-aware blobfish’s humorous cartoon commentary layered atop a traditional nonfiction text. I wondered about the ease in which he shared his thinking. Had there been enough of a rapport between us for him to feel comfortable in communicating? Does he prefer one-one-one conversations?

In the earlier group share-aloud, I reinforced that there aren’t any right or wrong ponderings about the metapicturebooks we encountered. I reiterated a statement from the
third session, “You don’t get a grade in here. All that matters are what you think and you feel.” After self-selecting metapicturebooks and exploring them independently or with a partner, I prompted the children to reflect on the affordances that they encountered. They shared their perceptions of design as well as actions they experienced or could experience when reading a metapicturebook. Each proffered thought was recorded on the anchor chart (see figure 7-5). Based on these transactional reading experiences, child participants also embellished their earlier responses to another anchor chart that asked, “What is a book?” (see figure 7-6). That anchor chart reflected their prior knowledge (shown in black marker) and developing schema about what a book is, and the possibilities of what it might be. Had those activities and constructed anchor charts along with my assurances not only piqued Hakim’s interest, but raised his level of comfort in thinking about metapicturebooks? In his one-on-one interview, he noted his difficulty thinking of the main idea and his enjoyment of the self-referentiality in the various metapicturebooks that he read. As Hakim gained familiarity of the open-endedness presented in The Picturebook Project, he returned for half of the second week’s sessions. Although one morning Hakim informed me he fell out of bed the night before, hit his eye, could no longer see out of it and so, wouldn’t be able to attend that day’s session, for those other sessions in which he participated, he constructed settings for his monster to inhabit within the pages of a book, a pop-up cave, and a separate environment outside of the book.
Figure 7-5: Anchor chart of child participants’ reflections about affordances.
Figure 7-6: Anchor chart on what a book is and what it can be, but not yet is.
Figure 7-7: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on creative autonomy.

Alejandro’s uninterrupted retelling of favorite book:
Because I was like today is my book and then, and then the koala just went and said, and then he met a koala and then he, and then he, the koala made a lot of more friends like dinosaur too, like that, and animals and then he was like, ‘Why you doing this? This is my book. I’m the person write, I’m the person with, I’m the person writing and you’re supposed to make pictures.’ And you’re supposed to clean. And then, and then, uh, when he made it all of them were not keeping clean and being things like that, and then there, and then they were so happy, and then he was like, ‘This is, this is my book. You’re not supposed to be doing them.’ And then koala was like, ‘It’s not your book. It’s all our book because we are here and we are here too with us. So, it’s our book. You cannot stop us from reading somebady else’s book because it’s just ours.’ And then he said, ‘This is my book!’ And then he was not happy and then, and then he was really mad but then when they told him to use everybody’s book he was really mad.

Several surveys responses indicated children benefit from the visual in reading these picturebooks:
- “It’s very visual so they understand better.”
- “They learn more if they see the picture.”
- “It provides them another way (visual) to see books.”

Alejandro to me, regarding The Picturebook Project:
A: Because we’re using our imagination...
A: Your imagination does a lot of things. You can remember what’s so fun...

What makes you an artist?
A: Because I use my imagination and, I know stuff and I make stuff and I use other...

...when I saw the book, these are the book of monkeys I was thinking about I can just make a book about monkeys. But the monkeys are trying to get a banana. So, they try other books to get it, but never got it. So, they told another to get it for them... The other monkey was getting it for them... and he got trapped by the book.

What’s that going to be?
A: Like the tower for like the more stronger ones.
L: For the more stronger, what?
A: Animals.
L: So, tell me what’s going on here.
A: Like the book is eating... these are the persons.

So, that’s why these are cut off? Because the rest of it is inside the book? The monster?
A: No, that book was a monster. [sic] eat apart that animal... he made another animals be a stronger and now the animals that are stronger, they now eat another animals and, but the zebra, the only animal who’s so long! Because the book wanted one to be normal.

What’s going on here [motion over mountain].
A: The. That’s where where they’re supposed to be.
Creative Autonomy of Open-ended Responses to Metapicturebooks

Alejandro was a bilingual rising third grader. In my reflective fieldnotes I documented my difficulty understanding him. Sometimes his enunciation was under-articulated. He stuttered in oral conversation too. His family came from Costa Rica, and he spoke Spanish and English. I was unable to discern if he under-articulates and/or stutters in Spanish too. I remained unsure if there was an underlying speech problem or if his manner of speaking could’ve been attributed to second-language acquisition. When I didn’t know what he was saying, I was mindful not to ask him to repeat himself too many times, but rather I carried on the conversation listening for semantic cues. I conjectured that too much attention on his verbal communication deficits might’ve resulted in him being frustrated.

While constructing his poster of printed polaroids taken from the ninth session, Alejandro carefully organized them into linear rows and columns on the posterboard. Noticing his peers had written various descriptions or captions under the photographs on their posterboards from prior sessions, Alejandro wanted to do the same. Initially, he attempted to put the first letter of the name of each child participant featured in each photograph. He soon requested my help. I sat with him in the Music Room and began to help him to sound out the onset, i.e., the initial phonological unit of each name. After a few attempts, I soon realized Alejandro was unable to identify letter sounds. He was just guessing from the limited number of letters in the English alphabet familiar to him. As an alternative, I’d say for instance, “Safaa, /s/” and then name the letter, -s. Though he was able to write out a few letters in the alphabet independently, he was unaware of some of
the letters appearing in his name. On a Post-it I’d print those unknown letters for him to copy.

During the eighth session I observed him opt to copy the title page and first page of the narrative in Pett’s (2016) *This Is My Book!* (see top left corner of figure 7-7). In his spontaneous retelling as told in his interview, albeit slightly rambling, he adopted the author’s perspective. He demonstrated his grasp of the narrative, especially the rivalry between the author and drawn characters. I wonder if Alejandro had been used giving oral retellings in school or at home and defaulted into that mode. I also wonder if writing out his favorite meta-picturebook gave Alejandro a sense of accomplishment. Or, perhaps, his choice to copy it was for subsequent readings. I also mulled over his reliance on visual cues to make meaning. Even supposing an inadequacy of traditional early literacy skills, The Picturebook Project as an intervention by design endeavored to give child participants unrestricted access to any mode of communication of their individual choosing. For Alejandro, his preference was visual storytelling.

At first blush, Alejandro’s many creations weren’t straightforward in their meanings. Fictional story worlds materialized from his many creative imaginings. In his interview, he shares his awareness that his own imagination acted as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. He used it to “make stuff” (see figure 7-7). His collection of senseis constructed from wooden “loose parts” were poised to fight whenever the king gave the directive. In creating his book monster, he illustrated not just one scene but composed a whole story about its carnivorous appetite and how the survivors came to be. With mixed media Alejandro transformed a pad of white paper into an open book that became a playground for his monkeys. He shared his vision of their movement jumping and
playing between the two-page spread as well as how they all ended up there. In my reflective fieldnotes after the fifth session, I remarked “Once [Alejandro] has tools in his hands, he knows what to do...how to execute those ideas” to realize his creative vision.

Alejandro thrived when he participated in The Picturebook Project, for he had autonomy and affirmation of his creative tendencies. But he floundered elsewhere during The Summer Care Program. I often noticed him sitting in the time-out couch in the lounge of the Community Center. In my fieldnotes I wrote, “[Alejandro] tends to get called out by other children trying to get him in trouble... I’m unsure if it’s just miscommunication owing to his speech or, I wonder if he has been pigeonholed as the ‘troublemaker’.” I asked Akele what happens in the moments preceding Alejandro’s frequent trips to the time-out couch. Pronouncing him to be a “good kid though” during his interview with me, Akele empathized with his plight and provided some clarity,

He doesn’t even mean it. He’s like...sometimes when I tell him like ‘what are you doing?’ he’s like ‘I didn’t even hit him that hard.’ Like...and he has this innocent look like...and I understand ‘cause like it was the same thing with me. You can’t hit people and expect them not to go tell, even if you’re joking with them, because some people, since you’re different, they’re gonna try to get you in trouble all the time, ‘cause of his accent.... And like, you know, with him, I tell him like, ‘Bro, you’re a good kid. You don’t need to hit other people. I understand like you wanna play with people, you wanna... You have, you have all this energy, but hitting people isn’t the right way.’

Interpersonal dynamics, language and/or communication barriers, and cultural differences comprised some of the obstacles that Alejandro faced at the Summer Care Program.
Caring staff like Akele who had experienced such hurdles himself as a newcomer and English Language Learner approached him with compassion and understanding, yet always gave deference to the inviolable rules.
Figure 7-8: Re-actualized of “glowing data” rhizome on re-made metapicturebooks.

- “[Making and sharing these projects] provides and outlet for [children] to express their creativity.”
- “They understand it deeply, [sic] and show their art work.”
- “It will help them think more about the book.”

- (L) Hi! This is Elina. Let me take you on a tour.
- (R) Look I am the illustrator and the author. So this is my book. Not anybody else’s [sic].

- (L) Oh, hi reader. Please let me out of this book. I am trapped. Wait, what are you looking at?
- (R) Ohhhh, reader [sic] please help me! What is that? You think it is a monster?

- This book is a monster
- Put your face in it and you will be a heart!

- The ground is shaking. I’m out of the book! Wiggle the book to make it stop and turn the page.
- Help me!!! Pull the tab 3 times to pull her out and turn the page.

- What are you looking at ahhhhh look down

- A door.
- (L) Let’s be together. I want you to be my friend.
- (R) –because I am lonely.
Child Participants’ Re-creations of Metapicturebooks

Of the metapicturebooks chosen for the first few sessions of The Picturebook Project, Byrne’s (2014) *This Book Ate My Dog!* invites readers to contravene conventional book-handling by way of spinning and shaking, Jullien’s (2016) *This Is Not a Book* repurposes the book as an object, and Lehrhaupt’s (2013) *Warning: Do Not Open This Book!* rethinks the action of closing a book at the fictional narrative’s end. By and large, the titles read aloud during sessions one to four emphasized boundary breaking. Either the book itself or a character in the book had been self-aware that it was an object in the reader’s hands. Focus on affordances as action possibilities ramped up in session five when I provided the child participants a range of metapicturebooks to choose from and explore. As discussed earlier in this chapter, figure 7-5 shows an anchor chart constructed from their reflections about their transactions with these metapicturebooks. Re-posting this anchor chart in the sessions that followed, this reflective list became seeds of inspiration for their creative responses. All of the child participants’ re-creations of metapicturebooks featured in figure 7-8 were produced in the second week.

Starting at the top right corner of figure 7-8, Etimad modeled her “Book With A Heart” after Tullet’s (2011) *The Book With a Hole.* Included alongside her instructions to “put your face in it” is an informational diagram of how to become a heart. This inclusion parrots the addition of diagram on how to turn and shake at the bottom of a letter addressed to the reader in Bryne’s (2014) metapicturebook. Moving clockwise in figure 7-8, Lydia experimented with pop-ups and moveable parts in her construction of a picturebook. Her text addresses the reader in anticipation of their tactile interaction with
the book. Similar to Etimad, Lydia instructs the reader on how to physically manipulate
the book. In a way these instructions are akin to scaffolding the particular affordance
since they might’ve known it deviated from traditional book handling conventions.

In the top left corner of figure 7-8, Misrak has patterned her picturebook after
Pett’s *This Is My Book!* As a self-aware author and illustrator reluctant to let go of her
prized possession, the very book in the hands of the reader, she toys with that reader. Her
picturebook and that of Tamah’s became platforms for creative experimentation by way
of performative response (Sipe, 2008). All of the remaining photographs in figure 7-8
feature pages from Tamah’s constructed *metapicturebook* aptly titled, “This is a
monster.” The red felt is the monster’s tongue bursting through the cover of the book.
Inside the first two-page spread, Tamah used flattened clay in the upper left corner of the
verso and recto of increasing size. She illustrated a trapped character that gazes directly at
and addresses the reader. Glancing sideways at the impending clay blob, the character
supposedly learns from the reader that a monster soon approaches. The ground begins to
shake from, presumably, the weight of the monster. In turning the page, Tamah’s
character pops out of the book. She instructs the reader to wiggle the book to stop the
ground from shaking. After another page turn, the reader encounters a door from behind
which a partial gray blob, likely the monster, appears. In one of Jullien’s repurposings
featured in *This Is Not A Book*, a door into an interior room made from a page flap. I
wonder if Tamah had fashioned her door after that example. Opening the door, the reader
discovers the main character’s hiding spot. She solicits the readers help once again.
Cornered by the monster who just frightened her with a “Boo!” on a missing page, the
complex learns of an offer of friendship, for the monster is lonely. Its frowning facial
expression reinforces that loneliness. Tamah leaves the reader in suspense.

Approximating postmodern style in its indeterminacy, Tamah’s unresolved narrative had me pondering if a friendship ensued or if the character escaped her captivity inside the book. Either way, her *metapicturebook* as an aesthetic response turns on its head those structural expectations of her efferent retellings that she articulated in her interview.

Furthermore, it contravened her quite adamant declaration, “I don’t really like writing.”
Figure 7-9: Re-actualized “glowing data” rhizome on play and subversion.

Several surveys stated creativity was what they enjoyed the most about the exhibit:
- “I enjoyed seeing the creativity that the children had after reading the books.
- “All the creative artwork.”
- “The artwork was very creative.”

How do children benefit from reading these picturebooks? The social fun of playing!

Three survey responses noted the Wearable metapictuebooks as what they enjoyed the most at the exhibit.
- I like how the kids interacted with the book and had design on it.
- Playing with the beard book to mouth to hat, all the interactive ones.
- The use of interactive books.

Dawit: Oh, I'm the sheriff. I'm gonna arrest you, man.
Alejandro: I arrest you now.
Dawit: I arrest you now. You're going to jail FOREVER!

Wasiaah explains expectations of the Ethiopian Culture to me. When they [children] go home, they are super nice, da, da, da, they come out here and all of a sudden everybody's just going wild, they're just having fun, you know. So, I feel like they get really mixed up...
Sociodramatic Interactions and Playful Subversions

Alejandro and Dawit explored Lemke & Lentz’s Wearable Book series and Schultz’s (2007) *Zoo Faces* for nearly ten minutes. Turning the pages to encounter each illustrated character, they’d take on the persona and interact with each other. Sometimes their play fighting escalated to show physical dominance of one character over the other. Sounds, like a “Roar!” or declarative sentences like “I’m a chef,” enhanced their sociodramatic play. Still frames of video footage show the intensity of their gaze as they beheld each other’s choice of illustrated animal or fictional person. The video image at the bottom of figure 7-9, though somewhat cut off, shows Dawit, in a red shirt, fashioning a sheriff’s ten-gallon hat and Alejandro, in a striped shirt wearing a police officer mask. They were pushing and shoving to get one another arrested and jailed. In their make-believe fracas, a foot knocked over the leg of a video camera’s tripod stand. The entire room gasped and Nuru immediately declared, “That was Dawit!” In that moment, I could sense the child participants watching me and closely listening for my response. I asked Dawit if he was okay from his fall to the floor. Then, reassured him that camera equipment would be fine. Addressing both Alejandro and Dawit, I took them aside to remind them in a neutral tone to keep their behavior on track. In briefly prompting them to think about, “what could you learn from that?,” I hoped to convey my trust in their autonomous choices.

Over the course of sessions five and six, Lydia and Tamah produced pages similar to the Wearable Book series. Though neither sister directly transacted with any of those *metapicturebooks*, Alejandro and Dawit did share with the group their favorite two-page
spread when reflecting on affordances. On figure 7-5, I wrote “cut outs” and holes” and “masks” at their prompting. I wonder if these interactions had encouraged their imaginings that unfolded. Lydia made an owl mask. Tamah made, in her words, “a crazy shark beard.” Alejandro also copied his favorite wrestling mask. Visitors to the exhibit made note of their enjoyment in reading this Wearable book series as well as recognized the benefits of sociodramatic play.

By the ninth session, Misrak stopped attending the Summer Care Program. Safaa and Hakim were also absent that day. Nuru also had summer school remediation in reading at her public elementary to attend for that entire week. With just three participants (Alejandro joined us mid-way through the session), all of whom had completed their most recent responses for the exhibit, I chose to read-aloud McDonnell’s (2014) *A Perfectly Messed Up Story* in anticipation that any response to that metapicturebook might be completed during the remaining time, especially given the shortened duration of the session because of that day’s trip to the local pool for the children enrolled in the Summer Care Program. At the start of that session, we played a dice game called story starters. Every child participant had a turn to roll the dice. For whichever number was rolled, each read aloud the sentence associated with that number posted on an anchor chart (see figure 7-10). I had already assigned numbers to sentences that were opening lines from well—known picturebooks. Instead of retelling that familiar narrative, each continued her version of the story aloud, as if rewriting it.
Figure 7-10: Anchor chart of Story Starters from ninth session.

Figure 7-11: Tell Me anchor chart from ninth session.
In making-up new stories from old ones, or rather, hijacking them, I had hoped to prepare their thinking about the above-titled picturebook. That story starts over the opening line again and again as spills, fingerprints, plops of jelly, and smears of peanut butter land atop the pages much to the chagrin of the Louie, the main character. In previewing the front and back cover at the start of the read-aloud, Tamah declared, “I already love this book.” She thought it would be funny. At that time, Alejandro entered the Arts & Craft Room to join us. Halfway through the picturebook, an exasperated Louie speaks directly to the reader to say in a series of five speech balloons,

We need to show some respect here.
Books are important.
They TEACH us stuff
AND
They INSPIRE us. (McDonnell, 2014, n.p.)

A scribble of primary colors appears on a subsequent page. Louie command the implied reader to get a paper towel. A smudge results after a vigorous “RUB. RUB. RUB.” Scratching the page, Lydia declares to the group, “It’s real! It’s real! The crayon is real! I got some on me!” Etimad and Tamah rub their pointer fingers across the page and check for residue. A brief deliberation ensued as to whether the scribble had been made with crayon or oil pastels. At the conclusion of the metapicturebook, I prompted the child participants to share their likes, dislike, patterns and puzzle in keeping with Chambers’ (1996) Tell Me framework. Tamah immediately announces, “I got nothing... for dislike.” Alejandro, on the other hand, lamented that Louie never got to finish telling his story. Their thinking was captured in my shorthand on an anchor chart. See figure 7-11.
In setting up the Arts & Craft Room that session, I lined up all of the second-hand picturebooks and books for the child participants to choose from, if they so choose to mess one up. Immediately, Alejandro started to remove dust jackets. Lydia took one of those dust jackets and attempted to fit it onto another book, but it was a portrait-oriented cover she was trying to fit on a landscape-oriented picturebook. She asked me to help her find, “a sideways cover, because the book is sideways.” As seen in figure 7-9, she eventually settled on the dust jacket from the metapicturebook *This Book Will Not Be Fun.* (Dunlop, 2017) to wrap around Sendak’s (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are.* She thought her deceit for future readers was hilarious. Figure 7-3 shows Alejandro’s experimentation with oil pastels, for he wished to replicate the scribble that frustrated Louie. Then, with a handful of pens, he repeatedly stabbed at the book in attempt to “break it.” Next, he ripped out a corner of one page. Holding that torn piece, he yelled to me, “You’re never going to finish the story!” He stood up and hurriedly threw it away in the recycle bin. He reveled in this subversive act. Altogether this reader response led to the addition of three actions on the anchor chart shown in figure 7-5. They include “breaking it,” “gluing it,” and “messing it up.”
CHAPTER 8

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

...to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes that have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed.

(Foucault, 1982/1988, p. 10)

Unpacking a “staircase” curriculum requires collaboration within and across grades so as to coordinate and align goals for student learning, instruction and assessment (Au & Raphael, 2011). In this process, the onus was on the first-grade team at my former elementary school, myself included, to build on what was learned in Kindergarten and prepare them for what is to come in second grade. Along with reading and instructional coaches, we sought to improve literacy achievement through the creation of our own curriculum responsive to the needs of our linguistically and culturally diverse student population. Although we pushed the curricular boundaries as much as possible to go beyond the five pillars—phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—our reading instruction and practices still had to fall within established parameters in meeting each child reader’s needs. Available resources and the meeting of external State-wide standards and County-wide curricular pacing guides often constrained our efforts. Even though we eschewed packaged reading programs, the purchase of an entire book room of leveled guided reading books influenced how our elementary-aged readers accessed the imagined possibilities of children’s literature. While naming the benefits of a staircase curriculum, Au and Raphael (2013) remark on
the shortcomings of packaged reading curriculums intended as the be-all and end-all for realizing literacy gains; they write,

Perhaps the most insidious effect of this over-reliance is that administrators and teachers in some schools have come to believe that it is the program, rather than the teachers’ expertise and agency, that has the greater impact on students’ literacy achievement.

Looking back on my literacy instruction, I recognized that there failed to exist any exacting recipe on how I shaped my students into not only proficient readers, but zealous ones that delighted in picturebooks in ways that far exceed those five pillars. Yet, I know that my instructional use of leveled readers did not solely result in yearly literacy gains.

Identifying the means, the what, focuses too much attention outside of the child reader; it diminishes his or her autonomy. As captain of a literacy boat that sails to where the wild things are or elsewhere, each child reader charts his or her own course. Of course, the existing environs guide and inform whether or not to navigate rough seas of the unknown or float in calm and familiar waters. Resources like leveled readers or basal texts when paired with guided instruction needn’t be the essential tools to realize grade-level expectations. Although some elementary-aged children might revel in moving up a level to independently read a more complex text based on their accuracy and fluency rates, the rigidity of such formulaic instruction follows a predetermined path that, I believe, overemphasizes print as the leading symbology of contemporary multimodal communication, understates the sociocultural context unique to each classroom, school, and district, and lacks the pizazz indispensable to becoming a lifelong reader. As a pragmatic intervention, The Picturebook Project aimed to mitigate this disparity for a
particular set of characteristically marginalized children, that is, low socioeconomic, ethnic minority English language learners who are often subjected to the most restricted perversions in reading instruction. By uncovering the possibilities of what reading transactions with metapicturebooks may be, I hope to shift the conversation onto those intra-actions between child reader and his or her environment. Findings from this study make visible through my re-actualizations what becomes possible when certain elementary-aged children in a certain spatial setting and sociocultural contexts and given certain open-ended and artistic tools helm their own aesthetic reading experiences. Wielding my “expertise and agency,” I positioned each individual child reader and the greater interpretive community and environment (setting, culture, and tools) present during each session of The Picturebook Project as the mutually constitutive determiners of the how. From the curation of certain metapicturebooks and loose parts to the Summer Care Program and its staff at the Community Center, environmental factors influenced, inspired, motivated, and affected the course of meaning-making, real or imagined, that each child chose to traverse during their reading transactions.

**Evoking Wonder Through Metapicturebooks**

I firmly believe that cultivating a lifelong love of reading requires far more than any successful oral reading of a decodable book with a minimal percentage of errors or correctly answering multiple-choice comprehension questions gleaned from a close reading. For such instructional- or assessment-oriented tasks narrow the purpose of reading to a finite task. To Short (2013), children’s literature is more than a means to
attain mastery of a demonstrable skill. Taking notice of the potential for stories to invite child readers to actively participate, she emphasizes literature as “the imaginative shaping of experience and thought into the forms and structures of language” (p. 233). More importantly, through the lived experience of transacting with literature, a child’s way of seeing the world transforms, not necessarily because of the acquisition of knowledge; rather, active participation in a story encourages them to expand on possibilities yet to exist in the world. Short adds, “literature stretches children’s imaginations and encourages them to go beyond ‘what is’ to ‘what might be’” (p. 235). Through wonder reading is becoming. The process of evoking that wonder in order to lay the foundation for such meaning potentials required deliberate planning of read-alouds, discussions, games, tools, materials, *metapicturebooks* as well as selection of research site. That is not to say other picturebooks without metafictive devices fail to evoke wonder. Rather, to explore the possibilities of what reading experiences may also be, but not yet is for a child participant, I chose to avail *metapicturebooks* that deviate from leveled reading texts in their presentation of divergent possibilities like novel affordances and/or boundary-breaking metafictive devices. With the evocation of wonder in mind, I looked to ongoing publishing trends to generate a list of *metapicturebooks* generally contrary to those bland leveled readers. Even so, wonder cannot be forced upon a child. It organically emerges in unanticipated ways.
Every Context Unique Unto Itself

In designing The Picturebook Project as a pragmatic intervention, I first recalled those picturebooks in which child readers had been swept away in a sea of imagination or riotous laughter spread across my classroom like wildfire. But pursuing prescriptive means for young readers to experience such joyousness through a selection of certain titles wasn’t my research objective, for such transactional experiences are unique to the particular reader and the environment in which he or she is situated. I didn’t intend for methodology section of The Picturebook Project to be read as a formula for cultivating aesthetic reading responses. Such experiences cannot be reduced to a step-by-step procedure and replicated because the environmental factors present during The Picturebook Project are unique unto themselves. Perhaps, my critical self-reflection on biases and data collection methods may inspire other so-called outsiders to a community to seek out those stakeholders and resources in order to glean a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional and interconnected sociocultural contexts at play in reader responses.

Finding Pleasure

By and large, the child participant’s reception to these titles was refreshing. Alejandro’s broad smile or Tamah’s comment about how it was “fun when you do something with the book” typified the kind of delight experienced during The Picturebook Project. Many of their reader responses embraced Barthes’ (1975) differentiation of pleasure as plaisir or jouissance. Barthes asserts that a reader
experiences plaisir when a text mimics a familiar culture. Jouissance occurs when a text destabilizes reader’s “historical, cultural, and psychological assumptions” (p. 14). Subversive actions taken in response to McDonnell’s *A Perfectly Messed Up Story* were more attuned to jouissance. Alejandro partially tore out pages. Etimad glued her second-hand book shut. Lydia swapped out book covers. On a much more basic level, the choice of cultural tools and picturebook titles available within their environment, my reassurances that welcomed all manner of responses, and the sociocultural context permitted disruption of the official regime of in-school reading instruction. I purposefully decided to omit lined paper and journals from those materials available to child participants. Open-ended “loose parts” and art supplies offered these elementary-aged children an opportunity to experience picturebooks in ways that diverged from those typical of their in-school ones.

**Overcoming Discomfort**

Despite the open-endedness in which child participants exercised autonomy in choosing how to aesthetically respond to *metapicturebooks*, this departure from learned ways of responding to picturebooks may have been distressing to Hakim. It nudged him enter into novel story and social worlds and immersion himself into his lived experience. Imagining ventured into uncharted waters. He didn’t have a model to imitate; instead, he took cues from the interpretive community and his own prior knowledge about responding to picturebooks from in-school experiences. Although he no longer had to remain outside of the story, he sought comfort in that expectation. His choice to add a
horizontal line across a blank page of his book to separate his drawing of a monster from its description resembles a typical format of creative writing expected in schools. Eventual exploration of self-selected *metap* picturebooks at the fifth session boosted his confidence as he gained familiarity with metafictive devices and novel design affordances. An aesthetic impulse doesn’t happen on demand. It is particular to the individual child reader transacting within certain environmental conditions.

Student innovation, creativity, and risk-taking languish in an atmosphere of prescriptive procedures and learned replication of retelling conventions. Encountering a shift away from such reading expectations that stay within the bounds of “the four corners of the page” had been initially be daunting to Hakim. It took time for him to harness his aesthetic impulse, and given more time, I wonder how much more comfort he might’ve had in focusing his attention on a continuation of his newly discovered aesthetically-oriented transactional stance. When too much emphasis is placed on an efferent stance in literacy practices in and out of schools, retellings become reduced to formulaic recall of emblematic narrative structures and use of sequential transition words. Reading picturebooks become reduced to ephemeral pleasure. Child reader autonomy diminishes. I believe, The Picturebook Project shines a glimmer of pedagogical hope. But how it may play out in a classroom setting is a question for a future study.

**Adjustments to the Official Regime on In-School Reading Instruction**

Freed from the constraints of standardized curriculum, pressures to produce demonstrable literacy gains, and insufficient allotments of time, The Picturebook Project
marveled at the possibilities of what aesthetic reader response may be. The purposeful choice of a research site outside of school, both temporally and spatially, accommodated the shift of thinking about picturebooks this study occasions. Beholden to the graciousness of the Community Center in their support of this qualitative study, for it extends beyond their hospitality, I recognize that the atmosphere of the Summer Care Program was agreeable to celebrating the freedom of imaginative possibilities. Such autonomy remains incongruous with federal literacy policies.

**Rethinking Deficit Models**

As a seasoned educator, Alejandro’s muffled speech and inability to correctly identify capital letters when sounding out peers’ names to label his photographs, raised my proverbial red flag. Unlike a school setting in which I would’ve likely assessed his concepts about print and alphabetic knowledge, then sought out resources, such as the attentive ear of a Spanish speaking ESOL teacher and speech therapist, to further identify and then brainstorm strategies to address his unique needs likely impacting his language and literacy development, not only were these channels were unavailable, The Picturebook Project’s research design purposefully aimed to resist the dominance of such a deficit perspective. Outside of our session, Alejandro frequented the time-out couch in the lobby of the Community Center. According to staff, he often crossed the line in rough play. But during The Picturebook Project, he thrived in this environment. His creativity blossomed day to day. He exuded jouissance. Repeated transgressions in this
environment became a gateway for him to reimagine storytelling and realize alternate action possibilities in his creative responses.

In CCSS reading practices have been restricted to the acquisition and demonstration of autonomous skills and increasingly sophisticated reading comprehension strategies. It is all too rigid and controlled. If school-mandated Quarterly Language Arts excel spreadsheets based on standardized assessments that attend to close readings serve as the foremost means to monitor Alejandro’s early literacy gains towards state-mandated reading goals and to calculate annual teacher evaluations, then his creative storytelling might not get documented. Or worse yet, he might go without an opportunity to engage his aesthetic impulse through his intra-actions with a curated environment that privileges open-endedness of materials to generate imaginative possibilities. Absent a generous description of his creative responses, his literacy practices would easily become devalued.

Valuing Imaginative Play, Creativity, and Subversion

For the child participants, their familiarity with the freedoms of the Summer Care Program as, in the words of Mr. Jackson, “a big recess” at the Community Center and their adaptations to this curated environment that included metapicturebooks and open-ended cultural tools contributed to the repositioning of meaning-making onto the transactional relationship between picturebook and child reader within an interpretive community. This intra-active relationship fostered agency as expressed through imaginative play, creativity, and subversion. To an outside observer, this study may have
more closely resembled raucous play than traditional reading characterized by hushed, solitary absorption. But visitors to the exhibit appreciated the “creative artwork” that emerged from The Picturebook Project as well as the hands-on tactility that many of the meta picturebook titles invited. Several also commented on deepened understandings of story narratives that emerge from their visual re-actualizations as creative artwork. Such statements from community members signal a misalignment between their literacy beliefs and those practices codified in federal reading policies and adopted ELA standards that trickle down to their Neighborhood public elementary schools.

**Conclusion**

These meta picturebooks intrigued child participants; they were no longer just an object of gaze, a container of ideas to be passively read. Rather, when an aesthetic impulse prevailed, interminable action possibilities and creative meaning potentials emerged from their transactional reading experiences. As they encountered numerous design affordances proffered by the meta picturebooks that they explored, the list of actions written in red marker on the anchor chart in figure 7-5 multiplied. Of course, many of these actions contravened book-handling skills deemed essential to early literacy instruction (Clay, 2000; 2005) and disrupted the hegemony of print-centric textual interpretations. Not one speck of writing featured in Etimad and Misrak’s three-dimensional monkey traps as visual extensions of the story world appearing in Lehrhaupt’s *Warning: Do Not Open This Book!* Yet their constructed dioramas were a continuation of the fictional story. Divergent thinking opened the child participants’
minds to the possibilities of reading picturebooks that go beyond the limited purposes and expectations of literacy practices previously experienced in their respective classrooms. Tamah self-proclaimed her dislike of writing in an interview, yet she composed an entire metapicturebook of her own design to feature those affordances of greatest interest to her as well as play with inclusion of metafictive devices in her narrative. When a child’s autonomy reigns in their aesthetic responses to picturebooks, infinite creative possibilities unfold that are unique to each reader and the environment in which he or she is situated. No standardized assessment can normalize a child reader’s imaginings.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PICTUREBOOKS


A narration of Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Ugly Duckling” has been hijacked. A crocodile has escaped into the book and begins to chomp on the tale’s letters. Tasked with instructions to stop his encroachment, readers shake and physically manipulate the picturebook to rid of him while staying safe from harm. Of, it helps when the duckling draws a tutu on the crocodile in fuchsia crayon. The crocodile chews a hole through a page and escapes through the back cover.


As Bella strolls across the page with her leased dog leading the way, the carnivorous book swallows her dog and all subsequent rescuers. A letter addressed to the reader emerges from the gutter that choreographs physical interactions to help them escape their entrapment.


Racing across the two-page spread in burlap sacks, Bella’s dog bumps her and Ben into a portal that transports them into a counting book. Their humorous attempts to return to the original story land them into other picturebooks of various genres.

An oversized remote doesn’t control Ben’s new toy; instead, with each press of a button Bella’s dog moves and soon becomes stuck at the top of a page. After soliciting the help of a reader to press certain buttons restore a semblance of order, the picturebook concludes with a letter addressed to the reader that that encourages rereading aloud.


The captivating search for the one red dot among the graphic two-page spreads becomes an interactive play as readers move the progressively intricate paper sculptures.


A bespectacled mouse’s serious assurances to the reader begin on the front dust jacket flap. As surreal characters appear, like a Glow-in-the Dark Kung Fu Worm, the mouse continues to quell any hint of excitement, that is, until a monster dance party unfolds. He concludes that the picturebook’s title wasn’t misleading. Rather, he points out “was not fun for YOU. / I had a great time.”


Henry has an insatiable appetite for books, preferable red ones. With his consumption increasing at a feverish pace, he is becoming smarter too. Until digestive issues made him unwell and forced him to give up book-eating. He learns to satisfy his bibliophagia by reading books instead, but the hardcover copy of this picturebook features bite marks in the back cover and last few pages making the reader wonder about his conversion to being a reader.

In this enchanting tale, a young girl reader drifts on a wave made from sea of words to whisk away a boy. As a “child of words,” she helps him to discover the imaginative wonder of books. Multimedia illustrations that include clipped excerpts from the fairytale, Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Wonderland’s Cheshire Cat, and Toad from The Wind in the Willows, invite readers into a constructed storyworld.


Forget there being a monster at the end, there is a monster throughout the entirety of the picturebook, and that character is keen to remind readers not to turn any pages. Disobedience provokes peril. Despite the continuous chomping, no reader or animals are harmed. Eventually this monster reveals his greedy attempts—the confectionary treats featured at the end.


Based on its physical design affordances, this wordless picturebook offers alternative book functions. An open book may become may be a tent, a piano, or a stage. A two-page spread may be the flapping wings of a butterfly or farting cheeks of a rear-end. Verso and recto flaps of another spread open to create a room. Or a reader’s quick opening and closing of a book may signify hands clapping. The possibilities extend beyond the pages of this board book.

At first glance the varying sized pages appear as a rainbow of colors. Readers follow the instructions to open a series of nestled book covers of diminishing size inversely proportional to the visual size of the characters portrayed in each title. Once all of the pages of book covers have been opening, a reader proceed to close them.


With the ink-black pages in stark contrast to its prequel, this story details the ruinations that happen when animal characters become trapped inside a closed picturebook. Their desperate bribes directed at the reader attempt to thwart the closing of the book at its nearing end.


Ignoring the title and endpaper’s pleas to not open this picturebook, readers forge ahead and unleash a troop of monkeys that wreak havoc on the words and pictures. Continuing to urge readers to cease and desist page turns, toucans and an alligator soon join the pandemonium. To return this book to a semblance of order, a banana trap is rigged and readers are asked to slam the book shut to contain the mayhem once and for all, that is, until the picturebook is opened again.

Each two-page spread reveals the lower half of caricatures facial hair—lumberjack, pirate, cowboy, sailor, Santa, and police officer. With a symmetrical notch cut out from the top of the gutter, readers may hold the open book under their nose to try on mustaches and beards.


With an arc cut out from the bottom of this board book, hats of a firefighter, cowboy, chef, and Viking may be fashioned.


With die-cuts and notches, each two-page spread transforms readers into various characters when eyes and nose are placed in the holes. This picturebook features masks of a superhero, scuba diver, hockey player, wrestler, ninja, and fighter pilot.


Not all teeth are the same size and shape as evidenced by the many spooky characters, animals, and predators on each two-page spread reveal. From a vampire, werewolf, skeleton, and zombie to a beaver and shark, this picturebook is ready to wear.

This pop-up book invites readers to pull or slide tabs, lift or fold over flaps, push or spin a paper wheel and look either inside a pop-up cube or at a mirror’s reflection to coax the colored dots of increasing quantity out from their hiding places. Its clever paper-engineering disguises its counting and color-recognition premise.


Though Louie’s idyllic story begins with him singing “Tra la la la” in a pastoral setting, the unexpected appearance of a photographic blob of jelly and plop of peanut butter on the page soon give way to an existential crisis. As fingerprints, orange juice, and crayons deface the pages of his story, Louie realizes his self-referentiality as a character in a book being read by a reader.


Though simple in form as compared to high-tech digital devices, this picturebook lures readers into the wonderment of a story world to be discovered within its pages. Readers are encouraged to get closer and closer to the print to reveal the enduring value of books as an unending adventure of imagination.


Like a stand-up comedy routine, young readers take on the role of narrator in this pictureless picturebook, for they are compelled to read aloud the text no matter how “COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS” it becomes. A hodgepodge of nonsense and so-called “potty” words paired with artful typography convey a tone of riotous laughter as this read aloud is performed.

In desperation to be included in a nonfiction picturebook about sea life, a pink cartoon blobfish “photobombs” every two-page spread. Interruptions by the world’s ugliest animal provide ongoing commentary that lend humor as well as diminish information value.


As the title states, the text immediately addresses readers with a list of what’s not allowed in this picturebook. Of course, illustrations parade irreverent antics of cartoonish animal characters that eventually provoke the unseen narrator to concession.


The unassuming white cover and pages of this pop-up book open to reveal five sophisticated two-page spreads of paper engineering marvel. The dimensionality of the natural habitats features flora and fauna. The final spread features a mirror in which reveals the colored underside of the pop-ups. Readers may spin the circular poetry.


In this macabre cautionary tale readers soon learn that the story of the carnivorous book that lurks in libraries, bedrooms, and alleyways waiting to prey on unsuspecting victims is the one in their hands or laps.


The conversation between author and reader in explaining the former’s control over the narrative becomes hijacked by Percy the Perfectly Polite Panda, otherwise known as Spike. As Spike scribbles his vision of the book, many affordances like pull-tabs, flaps, and pop-ups are included to the humorous protest of the author, Mark Pett.

With a circular die-cut hole on each page the opens up to become a pair of animal eyes on each two-page spread, this board book functions as a mask, ready for play.


Unhappy that their milk is gone, toy has been chewed, and an odor lingers three cats solicit the help of the reader to lift flaps in search of the canine culprit. After racing out of sight of the reader, an invitation to give a gentle pat soothes the dog.


Unhappy that Gran Gran has gifted a copy of *Birthday Bunny*, Alexander converts a bland, didactic story into an action-packed fight in the forest. Scratched out words and childlike pencil drawings revise the print and visual narrative into rockets, bombs, and mayhem as Battle Bunny is intent to chop down all the trees and his enemies despite Presidential pleas.


Determined to fulfill the title’s proclamation, this personified book invites friends to realize these ends until a gloomy frog spoils plans. Readers are enlisted to help rid of this pessimism. The book’s face and spoken words are on the recto, while its inner thoughts appear on the verso.


Sized for the hands of a young child like Beatrix Potter’s beloved tales, this picturebook assures readers that, through a series of series of event, is actually a dog. The attached lease, text, pop-ups, and fuzzy texture are quite compelling.

Little Monster has his sights set on being in a scary story. But when faced with a spooky house and mysterious door, anticipation builds to such a degree that he has second thoughts. When the narrator dials back the fright after Little Monster’s begging, the reader is the one who is ultimately surprised.


Reliant on a reader’s imagination, this board book commands readers to press, tap, blow, rub and clap colored dots to transform and move across the page. Additional interactive actions like shaking cue the reader to engage in playful behaviors.


This oversized book has a half-circle hole cut out of its spine, so that when opened, it becomes a six-inch diameter circle bisecting the middle of each two-page spread. Black text and hand-drawn illustrations on white backdrops challenge readers to engage in divergent thinking activities like shooting a crumpled piece of paper through the hole like a basketball hoop or sticking their arm through it.


With pop-out pieces of varying shapes, sizes, and colors and slots, readers are invited to add to the accordion-style book to create their own sculpture.


With flashlight in one hand and Tullet’s die-cut board book in a black glossy finish with white letter in another, projections of light and shadow against a wall make the pages come to life.

At the outset self-aware characters (pig, dog, fairy, snake, monster, and stick figure) drawn by an ever-present author declare, """"There are people here... / And they’ve opened OUR BOOK!"""" Deliberating on how to best entertain the reader, they decide to tell a story and enlist the help of the author, as seen by headshots and a drawn body. Voicing their dissatisfaction, the author demands them to bugger off.


The author may intend to tell the story of a mouse, but her cat, Chester, has other plans. Chester commandeers the words and pictures by making revisions with his red marker that are in keeping with recognizable feline antics. The author protests her cat’s story making changes, and their back-and-forth squabble ensues. Even the mouse interjects to complain, “I can’t work like this!”


The main character, a bunny rabbit with a short attention span, enthusiastically greets the reader, but the rabbit’s demeanor turns sour when upon asking the all-important question, “BUT WHERE WERE YOU?” Voicing his emotion and frustration at the reader’s prior absence, he begs for the reader to sign a contract to be together forever, that is, until a phone call distracts him.


From oral storytelling traditions around campfires and cave paintings to papyrus, tapestries and screens, this personified picturebook recounts a Eurocentric evolution of story as a way for humans to share and record their histories and cultures for preservation and entertainment.
REFERENCES


Coleman, D. (2011, April 28). *Bringing the Common Core to life*. Talk at the
Chancellor's Hall, New York State Department of Education, Albany, NY.


Common Core State Standards Initiative. (n.d.f). Supplemental information for Appendix


classrooms. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP.


Coast Press.


259

(Eds.), *International handbook of psychology in education*. (pp. 319-359). Bingley, UK: Emerald.


Voices from the Middle, 12(3), 56-58.


(Eds.), *Talking about books: Creating liter- ate communities* (pp. 33–52).

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


New York, NY: Teachers College Press.


Boston, MA: Sense.


In N. K. Denzin & M. D. Giardina (Eds.) *Qualitative Inquiry—Past, Present, and Future.* (pp. 103-118). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.


APPENDIX A

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH FORMS†

Child Participants

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title: The Picturebook Project: Elementary-aged Readers’ Experiences with Picturebooks
Principal Investigator: Laura Hudock
Address: 263 Chambers
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
Telephone Number: (703) 942-9598
Advisor: Vivian Yenika-Agbaw
Advisor’s Telephone Number: (814) 863-8921

Subject’s Printed Name: ____________________________

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you and take your time to make your choice.

Some of the people who are eligible to take part in this research study may not be able to give consent because they are less than 18 years of age (a minor). Instead we will ask their parent(s)/guardian(s) to give permission for their participation in the study, and we may ask them to agree (give assent) to take part. Throughout the consent form, “you” always refers to the person who takes part in the research study.

1. Why is this research study being done?
We are asking you to be in this research because you are between the ages of 7 and 9 years and registered for summer [●] at [●] Community Center during the two weeks of this study. This research is being done to better understand how elementary-aged children can respond to picturebooks during an out-of-school literacy event. Approximately 12 children will participate in The Picturebook Project study at [●] Community Center.

2. What will happen in this research study?
This study involves ten sessions of The Picturebook Project to be held at the [●] Community Center during two weeks of summer [●]. During these sessions, researchers will share picturebooks, guide discussions, observe, listen, and administer tasks. There will be opportunities for you to explore and respond to picturebooks in various ways and to create your own texts. Researchers will observe, listen, document, photograph, and audio and video record you and your work during these sessions. Your text creations will become part of a temporary exhibit on display at [●] Community Center for community members to visit. To better understand your literacy background and interests researchers will interview you. You may skip any question that you prefer not to answer. Interviews will be audio recorded. As this study is being conducted, I may ask you to comment on text-creations, including artwork, photographs, or notebook entries, made during The Picturebook Project sessions or on your responses during session participation and interviews so as to edit, clarify, and further elaborate.

3. What are the risks and possible discomforts from being in this research study?

† All readily identifiable information about research site has been redacted in Appendices.
There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening. The confidentiality of your electronic data created by you or by the researchers will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

4. What are the possible benefits from being in this research study?

4a. What are the possible benefits to you?
Your would receive potential benefit:
□ from group activities, shared readings, and text creation experiences during The Picturebook Project sessions;
□ from opportunities for verbal, written, and visual self-expression, interactive play, or literacy experiences that contributes to cognitive development

4b. What are the possible benefits to others?
Others may benefit from a greater understanding of how elementary-aged children respond to picturebooks as well as create their own texts in an out-of-school setting.

5. What other options are available instead of being in this research study?
You may decide not to participate in this research.

6. How long will you take part in this research study?
If you agree to take part in The Picturebook Project, there will be ten sessions of 60-90 minutes in duration over two weeks of summer. There will also be one or two interviews, each up to 30 minutes in duration, during summer.

7. How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you decide to take part in this research study?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and sharing of your personal research information to people who have a need to review this information.
- Any texts or artifacts you produce during this study will be labeled with your initials.
- There will be a hard copy list that matches your name and initials with your pseudonym. A hard copy will be stored in a secure lock box in a secure location, that is, a locked filing cabinet in a home office to which only the Principal Investigator has keys.
- All electronic and hard copy data collected in this research study will be stored for 10 years, that is, until June 30, 2027, in a secure location for the purposes of future undetermined research.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, pseudonyms will be used and summer at Community Center will be generalized to summer care program at a community center within a major mid-Atlantic city’s metropolitan area.
Identifiable Information, such as stills of digital video or photographs of your face may be shared, if facial expression or body language is relevant to the research.

We will do our best to keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people may find out about your participation.
in this research study. For example, the following people/groups may check and copy records about this research.

- The Office for Human Research Protections in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
- The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. If your participation requires digital audio and video recordings, an outside transcription service may be used. This transcription service will agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

8. What happens if you are injured as a result of taking part in this research study?
In the unlikely event you become injured as a result of your participation in this study, medical care is available. It is the policy of this institution to provide neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment for research-related injury. By signing this document, you are not waiving any rights that you have against The Pennsylvania State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its investigators.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this research study?
A non-monetary gift of a children’s book will be offered to all participants of this study. There will be no monetary compensation.

10. Who is paying for this research study?
Principal Investigator will apply for and may receive partial funding through a Dissertation Research Initiation Grant from the Penn State’s College of Education. Community Center will donate some art supplies and the use of space within its facility. Some of the children’s book will be acquired through donations.

11. What are your rights if you take part in this research study?
Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

- You do not have to be in this research.
- If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
- If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

10. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?
Please call the head of the research study (Principal Investigator), Laura Hudock at (703) 942-9558 if you:

- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORP@psu.edu if you:

- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to offer input or to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.
INFORMED CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject or subject representative and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.

Signature of person who explained this research  Date  Printed Name
(Only approved investigators for this research may explain the research and obtain informed consent.)

Signature of Person Giving Informed Consent
Before making the decision about being in this research you should have:
• Discussed this research study with an investigator,
• Read the information in this form, and
• Had the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

Signature of Subject
By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily choose to be in this research and agree to allow your information to be used and shared as described above.

Signature of Subject  Date  Printed Name

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian for Child
By signing this consent form, you indicate that you permit your child to be in this research and agree to allow his/her information to be used and shared as described above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian  Date  Printed Name

Witness to Consent for Limited English Speaking Subjects
Witness Statement: As someone who understands both English and the language spoken by the subject or subject representative, your signature indicates that the English version of the consent form was presented orally in the language of the subject or subject representative, and that he/she was given the opportunity to ask questions.

Witness Signature  Date  Printed Name
ASSENT FOR RESEARCH

The research study has been explained to you. You have had a chance to ask questions to help you understand what will happen in this research. You **Do Not** have to be in the research study. If you agree to participate and later change your mind, you can tell the researchers, and the research will be stopped.

You have decided:  
______ To take part in the research.  
______ NOT to take part in the research.

_________________________  ___________________  ___________________
Signature of Subject        Date                 Printed Name
CONSENT FOR RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title: The Picturebook Project: Elementary-aged Readers’ Experiences with Picturebooks
Principal Investigator: Laura Hudock
Address: 263 Chambers
         The Pennsylvania State University
         University Park, PA 16802
Telephone Number: (703) 942-9558
Advisor: Vivian Yenika-Agbaw
Advisor’s Telephone Number: (814) 863-8921

Subject’s Printed Name: ________________________________

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you and take your time to make your choice.

1. Why is this research study being done?
We are asking you to be in this research because you are at least 18 years old and a [ ] staff member or director at Community Center. This research is being done to better understand how elementary-aged children can respond to picturebooks during an out-of-school literacy event. Approximately 5 people, that includes two directors and four summer [ ] staff from Community Center will participate in this study.

2. What will happen in this research study?
Researchers will lead The Picturebook Project sessions as child participants explore the design and construction of picturebooks. Occurring two weeks of summer [ ] , these sessions will be photographed and audio and video recorded. The child participants will respond to and create their own picturebook texts to become part of a temporary exhibit on display at Community Center for community members to visit.

Depending on staffing assignment and availability during The Picturebook Project sessions, you’ll be welcomed to join any of these sessions and to participate in the icebreakers and activities alongside the child participants. To better understand your literacy background, interests, and knowledge of this community in your role as staff or director as well as your reflections on this study, researchers will audio record each in-person interview with you. You may skip any question that you prefer not to answer.

As this study is being conducted, I may ask you to comment on text-creations, including artwork or photographs, made during The Picturebook Project sessions or your responses during interviews so as to edit, clarify, and further elaborate.

3. What are the risks and possible discomforts from being in this research study?
There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening. The
• The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
• The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. If your participation requires digital audio recordings, an outside transcription service may be used. This transcription service will agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

8. What happens if you are injured as a result of taking part in this research study?
In the unlikely event you become injured as a result of your participation in this study, medical care is available. It is the policy of this institution to provide neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment for research-related injury. By signing this document, you are not waiving any rights that you have against the Pennsylvania State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its investigators.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this research study?
A non-monetary gift of a children’s book will be offered to all participants of this study. There will be no monetary compensation.

10. Who is paying for this research study?
Principal Investigators will apply for and may receive partial funding through a Dissertation Research Initiation Grant from the Penn State’s College of Education. Community Center will donate some art supplies and the use of space within its facility. Some of the children’s book will be acquired through donations.

11. What are your rights if you take part in this research study?
Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

• You do not have to be in this research.
• If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
• If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

10. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?
Please call the head of the research study (Principal Investigator), Laura Huddock at (703) 942-9558 if you:

• Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
• Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORPprotections@psu.edu if you:

• Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
• Have concerns or general questions about the research.
• You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to offer input or to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.
- The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
- The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. If your participation requires digital audio recordings, an outside transcription service may be used. This transcription service will agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

8. What happens if you are injured as a result of taking part in this research study?
In the unlikely event you become injured as a result of your participation in this study, medical care is available. It is the policy of this institution to provide neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment for research-related injury. By signing this document, you are not waiving any rights that you have against The Pennsylvania State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its Investigators.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this research study?
A non-monetary gift of a children’s book will be offered to all participants of this study. There will be no monetary compensation.

10. Who is paying for this research study?
Principal investigator will apply for and may receive partial funding through a Dissertation Research Initiation Grant from the Penn State’s College of Education. Community Center will donate some art supplies and the use of space within its facility. Some of the children’s book will be acquired through donations.

11. What are your rights if you take part in this research study?
Taking part in this research study is voluntary.
- You do not have to be in this research.
- If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
- If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

10. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?
Please call the head of the research study (Principal Investigator), Laura Hudock at (703) 942-9558 if you:
- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORP@psu.edu if you:
- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to offer input or to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.
INFORMED CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject or subject representative and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
Signature of person who explained this research  Date                          Printed Name
(Only approved investigators for this research may explain the research and obtain informed consent.)

Signature of Person Giving Informed Consent
Before making the decision about being in this research you should have:
  • Discussed this research study with an investigator,
  • Read the information in this form, and
  • Had the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

Signature of Subject
By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily choose to be in this research and agree to allow your information to be used and shared as described above.

_________________________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
Signature of Subject                          Date                          Printed Name
Visitors to Exhibit

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title: The Picturebook Project: Elementary-aged Readers’ Experiences with Picturebooks
Principal Investigator: Laura Hudock
Address: 263 Chambers
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
Telephone Number: (703) 942-9558
Advisor: Vivian Yenika-Agbaw
Advisor’s Telephone Number: (814) 863-8921

Subject’s Printed Name: ____________________________

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you and take your time to make your choice.

Some of the people who are eligible to take part in this research study may not be able to give consent because they are less than 18 years of age (a minor). Instead we will ask their parent(s)/guardian(s) to give permission for their participation in the study, and we may ask them to agree (give assent) to take part. Throughout the consent form, “you” always refers to the person who takes part in the research study.

1. Why is this research study being done?
We are asking you to be in this research because you are at least 5 years old and visiting The Picturebook Project exhibit at [Blank] Community Center. This research is being done to better understand how elementary-aged children can respond to picturebooks during an out-of-school literacy event. Approximately 48 people will participate in this study.

2. What will happen in this research study?
Child participants in The Picturebook Project have explored the design and construction of picturebooks for the past two weeks. They’ve created their own picturebook texts that are now on display. You’d view their creations on display, fill out a comment card about the exhibit, and provide a little background information about your literacy experiences. Researchers will observe, listen, document, photograph, and audio and video record you during your visit to the exhibit.

3. What are the risks and possible discomforts from being in this research study?
There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening. The confidentiality of your electronic data created by you or by the researchers will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

4. What are the possible benefits from being in this research study?
4a. What are the possible benefits to you?
Your would receive potential benefit from viewing The Picturebook Project exhibit and
contributing your unique perspective as a community member. These experiences may generate feelings of satisfaction or pleasure.

4b. What are the possible benefits to others?
Others may benefit from a greater understanding of how community members regard these children’s text creations and picturebooks.

5. What other options are available instead of being in this research study?
You may decide not to participate in this research.

6. How long will you take part in this research study?
It would take 30 minutes to participate in this study, that includes viewing the exhibit and completing the comment card.

7. How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you decide to take part in this research study?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and sharing of your personal research information to people who have a need to review this information.

- You may label your comment card with your initials.
- There will be a hard copy list that matches your name and initials with your pseudonym. A hard copy will be stored in a secure lock box in a secure location, that is, a locked filing cabinet in a home office to which only the Principal Investigator has keys.
- All electronic and hard copy data collected in this research study will be stored for 10 years, that is, until June 30, 2027, in a secure location for the purposes of future undetermined research.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, pseudonyms will be used and summer program participants will be generalized to summer care program at a community center within a major mid-Atlantic city’s metropolitan area.

We will do our best to keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people may find out about your participation in this research study. For example, the following people/groups may check and copy records about this research.

- The Office for Human Research Protections in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
- The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. If your participation requires translation, an outside translation service may be used. This translation service will agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
8. What happens if you are injured as a result of taking part in this research study?
In the unlikely event you become injured as a result of your participation in this study, medical care is available. It is the policy of this institution to provide neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment for research-related injury. By signing this document, you are not waiving any rights that you have against The Pennsylvania State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its investigators.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this research study?
A non-monetary gift of a children's book will be offered to all participants of this study. There will be no monetary compensation.

10. Who is paying for this research study?
Principal investigator will apply for and may receive partial funding through a Dissertation Research Initiation Grant from the Penn State's College of Education. Community Center will donate some art supplies and the use of space within its facility. Some of the children's book will be acquired through donations.

11. What are your rights if you take part in this research study?
Taking part in this research study is voluntary.
- You do not have to be in this research.
- If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
- If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

10. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?
Please call the head of the research study (Principal Investigator), Laura Hudock at (703) 942-9558 if you:
- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORPProtections@psu.edu if you:
- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to offer input or to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.
INFORMED CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject or subject representative and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.

Signature of person who explained this research   Date   Printed Name
(Only approved investigators for this research may explain the research and obtain informed consent.)

Signature of Person Giving Informed Consent
Before making the decision about being in this research you should have:
- Discussed this research study with an investigator,
- Read the information in this form, and
- Had the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

Signature of Subject
By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily choose to be in this research and agree to allow your information to be used and shared as described above.

Signature of Subject   Date   Printed Name

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian for Child
By signing this consent form, you indicate that you permit your child to be in this research and agree to allow his/her information to be used and shared as described above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian   Date   Printed Name

Witness to Consent for Limited English Speaking Subjects
Witness Statement: As someone who understands both English and the language spoken by the subject or subject representative, your signature indicates that the English version of the consent form was presented orally in the language of the subject or subject representative, and that he/she was given the opportunity to ask questions.

Signature   Date   Printed Name
ASSENT FOR RESEARCH

The research study has been explained to you. You have had a chance to ask questions to help you understand what will happen in this research. You Do Not have to be in the research study. If you agree to participate and later change your mind, you can tell the researchers, and the research will be stopped.

You have decided: (Initial one) ________ To take part in the research.

________ NOT to take part in the research.

_________________________________________  ____________  __________________________
Signature of Subject                      Date                      Printed Name
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

Child Participants

Recruitment of Child Participants Script

1. **(Greetings)** Hi! If non-English speaking parent or legal guardian, proceed only if a translator is present/available.

2. **(Background)** I’m a PhD student from Penn State University’s College of Education and former 1st grade teacher at Parklawn Elementary. I will be conducting a research study at Bailey’s Community Center during summer RECQuest.

3. **(Purpose)** This research study is about how children can respond to picturebooks.

4. **(Research Design)** I’d like to tell you about it.

   To participate you have to be 7, 8, or 9 years old AND you have to be registered for RECQuest for the week of ____&____.

   ❖ During this study you *(your child)* will have opportunities to read and explore picturebooks in various ways and to create your *(his or her)* own texts. Your *(Your child’s)* creations will become part of a temporary exhibit on display at Bailey’s Community Center for visitors to see. I will also interview you *(your child)* once or twice.

5. **(PI Contact Information)** You may contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the study. My email and phone number are listed *(provide hard copy of Recruitment Flyer #1 and/or Consent Form)* on the flyer and consent form. *(Point)*.

   ❖ Is this something that you *(your child)* may be interested in participating in?

     o If prospective child participant affirms, then state: here is a flyer for you to take home and share with your parents *(or guardians)*. To take part in this study, a parent *(or guardian)* must come with you to Bailey’s to meet with me at one of the dates and times written on the flyer. *(State date and time)*. I’ll gladly answer any questions or concerns about the study.

     o If parent or legal guardian affirms, then continue with screening questions.

     o If no, then, thank you for your time.
Community Center Directors and Staff

Recruitment of Community Center Directors and Staff

1. **(Greetings)** Hi!

2. **(Background)** I’m a PhD student from Penn State University’s College of Education and former 1st grade teacher at Parklawn Elementary. I will be conducting a research study at Bailey’s Community Center during summer REQuest.

3. **(Purpose)** This research study is about how children can respond to picturebooks.

4. **(Research Design)** I’d like to tell you about it.

   To participate you have to be over the age of 18 AND a director of Bailey’s Community Center or staff at summer REQuest for the week of ___&___.

   - Depending on your staffing assignments and availability during the study, you’ll be welcomed to participate in and comment on the research study’s sessions and exhibit of child participants’ creations. I will also interview you once or twice.

5. **(PI Contact Information)** You may contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the study. My email and phone number are listed (provide hard copy of Recruitment Flyer #1 and/or Consent Form) on the flyer and consent form.

   - Is this something that you may be interested in participating in?
     - If yes, then continue with screening questions.
     - If no, then, thank you for your time.
Visitors to Exhibit

Recruitment of Visitors to Exhibit as Participants

1. **Greetings** Hi! If non-English speaking, proceed only if a translator is present/available.

2. **Background** I’m a PhD student from Penn State University’s College of Education and former 1st-grade teacher at Parklawn Elementary. I’m conducting a research study at Bailey’s Community Center.

3. **Purpose** This research study is about how children can respond to picturebooks.

4. **Research Design** I’d like to tell you about it.

   To participate in this research study you have to be at least five years of age. *(Only parent or legal guardian of prospective child participant can confirm).*

   The children already participating in this study have explored picturebook design. Their creations and those picturebooks that are part of this study are on display. You’d *(your child would)* visit the exhibit. Then, fill out a comment card about it.

5. **PI Contact Information** You may contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the study. My email and phone number are listed *(provide hard copy of Recruitment Flyer #1 and/or Consent Form)* on the flyer and consent form. *(Point).*

   - Is this something that you *(your child)* may be interested in participating in?
     - If prospective child participant affirms, then state: here is a flyer *(Recruitment Flyer #2)* for you to take home and share with your parents *(or guardians)*. To take part in this study, a parent *(or guardian)* must come with you to Bailey’s to meet with me at the time of the exhibit. *(Point).*
     - If adult or parent or legal guardian of a prospective child participant affirms, then continue with screening questions.
     - If no, then, thank you for your time.
APPENDIX C

ELIGIBILITY SCREENING QUESTIONS

| Primary Child Participants | To parent or legal guardian ONLY (confirm eligibility):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Before I explain the study, may I ask how old is your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>child today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If 7-9 years of age, continue, if not, <strong>STOP</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is your child enrolled in summer ___________ at ___________ Community Center for the week of ___________ and ___________?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, then continue. No, then <strong>STOP</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Director and Staff Participants | To prospective participants (confirm eligibility):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are at least 18 years of age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If no, stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are you _________ staff at Bailey's Community Center?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are you the director of _________ at _________ Community Center?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If no, stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Secondary Participants) Visitor to Exhibit | To prospective adult participant or parent (or legal guardian) of prospective child participant ONLY (confirm eligibility):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are you older than 18 years of age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If older than 18, continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If younger than 18, proceed only if a parent or legal guardian of child is present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are you at least 5 years old?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If no, stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If eligible: I'd like to provide you with a Consent for Research Form. It explains what your involvement would be in the study, benefits from participation, and information about confidentiality, and your child's rights. Please take your time to read. I will gladly explain or answer any questions or concerns about the study.

If not eligible: Unfortunately you (your child) are (is) not eligible for this study. I appreciate your time and interest.
APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT FLYERS

The Picturebook Project

* Is your child 7-9 years old?
AND
* Is your child registered for summer at Community Center?
If YES to both, your child may be eligible for participation in a research study.

A research study to better understand how elementary-aged children can respond to shared and individual readings of selected picturebooks during an out-of-school literacy event.


Where: Community Center
When: July 10-21, 2017 during
10 class sessions of 60-90 minutes duration
1-2 individual interviews of up to 30 minutes duration
Who: Researchers will lead the classes and conduct interviews.
Staff from Community Center will be present at all times.

If your child is interested in participating in this research study, a parent or legal guardian must meet with Laura Hudock for 15 minutes during one of the following days/times at Community Center:
Thursday, July 6th from 8:30am or 4:30pm
OR
Friday, July 7th from 8:30am or 4:30pm

For more information, please contact Principal Investigator:
Laura Hudock
PhD Candidate, A&D
Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education
The Pennsylvania State University
Call: (703) 942-9558 or Email: the.picturebook.project.2017@gmail.com
THE
PICTURE
BOOK
PROJECT
EXHIBIT

WHEN
Friday, July 21st
1:00 – 5:30pm

WHERE
Community Center

ALL ARE WELCOME!

FEATURING
Children’s artwork &
selection of
picturebooks to read.

RESEARCH STUDY
About how children
can respond to
picturebooks and the
local community can
respond to children’s
artwork.

IF YOU ARE
AT LEAST 5
YEARS OLD,
YOU MAY BE
ELIGIBLE TO
PARTICIPATE
IN THE STUDY!

CONTACT
Laura Hudock
PhD Candidate
College of Education
Penn State University
Ph: (763) 942-8550

VISIT • READ • LOOK • SHARE
APPENDIX E

COMMENT CARD FOR VISITORS TO EXHIBIT

ABOUT YOU

(1) How old are you? (Circle your age group):
   5-10  11-13  14-18  19-24  25-35
   36-45  46-60  61-75  75+

(2) Why did you come to Bailey’s Community Center today?

(3) Before visiting Bailey’s Community Center today, what is the last thing that you read?

(4) What do you like to read? Where do you read?

(5) Do you share what you read with anyone? If so, who? Why?

(6) What language(s) do you speak, write or read?

Directions: Please answer the questions on the front and back as best as you can. You may skip any question that you prefer not to answer.

Initials ________

ABOUT THE PICTUREBOOK PROJECT EXHIBIT

(7) What did you enjoy the most about the exhibit?

(8) How do you think children may benefit from making and sharing these projects?

(9) Did you read any of the picturebooks? (Circle): YES  NO
    If yes, which one(s)? What did you think of them?

(10) How do you think children may benefit from reading these picturebooks?
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview Protocol for Child Participants

How old are you today?
Tell me what grade you are going into at the end of the summer?
What do you hope happens in _____ grade?
What do you want to learn in _____ grade?
What do you like to do the most in the summer? Least?

Why do you go to _____? Do you enjoy it? Why? Tell me what your favorite things to do are?

Tell me, what is a reader? What does it take to become a reader?
• How would you describe reading?
  • If response is limited to text (words), ask: Do readers read pictures? How?
  • Do you consider yourself a reader? Why?
• Where/when (else) do/don't you like to read?
• What do you like to read?
• What is the most recent thing you've read?
• What do you enjoy most about reading? Least?
• Is anyone in your family/friends a reader? How do you know? Why do you think ____ reads?
• When did you learn to read? How did you learn to read?
• Do you ever talk about the things you read with anyone (family/friends)? Who? What do you say?
• Does anyone read to you? Tell me about it.
• Do you think it is important to read? Why?

Tell me, what is a writer? What does it take to become a writer?
• How would you describe writing?
  • Do you consider yourself a writer? Why?
• Where/when do you like to write?
• What do you like to write?
• What do you enjoy most about writing? Least?
• Is anyone in your family/friends a reader? How do you know? Why do you think ____ writes?
• When did you learn to write? How did you learn to write?
• What kinds of things do you have to write with at ________?
• Do you ever talk about or share the things you write with anyone (family/friends)? Who? What do you share? Why?
• Do you think writing is important? Why?

Tell me, what is an illustrator? What does it take to become an illustrator?
• How would you describe drawing?
• Do you consider yourself an illustrator? Why?
• Where/when do you like to draw pictures?
• What do you like to draw?
• What do you enjoy most about drawing? Least?
• Is anyone in your family a _____? How do you know?
• What do you need to be able to draw?
• When did you learn to draw? How did you learn?
• Do you ever share the things you draw with anyone (family/friends)? Who? What do you share? Why?
• Do you think it is important to draw? Why?
Tell me, what do you like to play? At school? Home? How would you describe playing?
Where/when do/don’t you play?
Who do you play with?
Is there anything that you might need to be able to play? Like what?
Do you think it is important to play? Why?

What languages does your family speak to you?
Which language did you learn first?
When did you learn ______ (second language)? How?

Besides home, school, and the community center, is there any other place that you go to? Tell me about it.

What do you hope to do in The Picturebook Project class?

---

Interview Protocol for Adult Participants

Tell me a little about your background.

Encourage information about where lived (for how long lived in community), education, previous employment, family, languages, etc.

How did you come to your position at ______ Community Center? For how long worked here?

What do you see as the primary importance of your position here at ______?

Who benefits from ______ Community Center? How?

What is the greatest need of those in the community (children) who live near or around Bailey’s?
Does ______ meet their needs? If so, how? If not, why?

If there was one aspect that you could improve about ______, what would it be?

Tell me about ______. (Purpose, People, Activities, how supports community’s needs?)

Would you say that literacy is a part of these children’s daily lives? If so, how? If not, why?
During the summer? During school year? During ______? At ______?

What literacy resources are available at ______ Community Center? Other places in community?

What obstacles might hinder availability/access to these resources?

What does literacy (being literate) mean to you?

How do you think local community members regard literacy?

Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you wish to tell me?
## APPENDIX G

### TELL ME FRAMEWORK QUESTIONING PROTOCOL

#### THE BASIC QUESTIONS

Share: (1) **enthusiasms** – what the reader likes or doesn’t like; (2) **puzzles** (i.e. difficulties) – what the reader doesn’t understand; and (3) **connections** (i.e. discovering patterns) – the connections that the reader makes to self, to other texts, big/abstract ideas & world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Dislikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you like about _______ (title)?</td>
<td>What did you dislike about _______ (title)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What caught your attention? What made you</td>
<td>Were there any parts that bored you? You skipped? Which ones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>want to keep reading? What would you have</td>
<td>If you gave up reading, where did you stop and what stopped you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like to see/read more of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Puzzles</th>
<th>Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you find puzzling in this book?</td>
<td>What patterns/connections did you notice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anything you found strange or</td>
<td>Were there any patterns you noticed? Did it remind you of anything?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surprising? Share/Tell me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anything you thought strange?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anything that you’d never found</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anything that took you completely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by surprise? Share.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you notice anything that didn’t make</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense? Tell me about it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tell Me Questioning

THE GENERAL QUESTIONS
When you first saw this book, even before you read it, what kind of book did you think it was going to be?
- What made you think this?
- Now you’ve read it, is it as you expected?

Have you read other books like it?
- How is this one the same/different?

Have you read this book before? [If so] Was it different this time?
- Did you notice anything this time you didn’t notice the first time?
- Did you enjoy it more or less?
- Because of what happened to you when reading it again, would you recommend other people to read it more than once, or isn’t it worth it?

While you were reading, or now when you think about it, were there words or phrases or other things to do with the language that you liked? Or didn’t like?
- You know how, when people speak, they often use some words or phrases or talk in away that you recognize as theirs: are some words or phrases used like that in this book?
- Have you noticed anything special about the way language is used in this book?

If the writer asked you what could be improved in the book, how would you have made it better?
- [Alternatively] If you had written this book, how would you have made it better?

Has anything that happens in the book ever happened to you?
- In what ways was it the same or different for you?
- Which parts in the book seem to you to be most true to life?
- Did the book make you think differently about your own similar experience?

When you were reading, did you ‘see’ the story happening in your imagination?
- Which details—which passages—helped you ‘see’ it best?
- Which passages stay in your mind most vividly?

How many different stories [kinds of story] can you find in this story? Was this a book you read quickly, or slowly? In one go, or in separate sessions?
- Would you like to read it again?

What will you tell your friends about this book?
- What won’t you tell them because it might spoil the book for them? Or might mislead them about what it is like?
- Do you know people who you think would especially like it?
- What would you suggest I tell other people about it that will help them decide whether they want to read it or not? Older than you? Younger?
- How should I give it to them? For example, should I read it aloud or tell them about it and let them read it for themselves?
- Is it a good thing to talk about it after we’ve all read it?

We’ve listened to each other’s thoughts and heard all sorts of things that each of us has noticed. Are you surprised by anything?
- Has anyone said anything that has changed your mind in any way about this book? Or helped you understand it better?
- Tell me about the things people said that struck you the most.

When you think about the book now, after all we’ve said, what is the most important thing about it for you?

Tell Me Questioning

THE SPECIAL QUESTIONS

How long did it take the story to happen?
- Did we find out about the story in the order in which the events happened?
- When you talk about things that happen to you, do you always tell your story in the order in which they happened? Or are there sometimes reasons why you don’t? What are the reasons?

Where did the story happen?
- Did it matter where it was set? Could it just as well been set anywhere? Or could it have been better set somewhere else?
- Did you think about the place as you were reading?
- Are there passages in the book that are especially about the place that the story is set?
  - What did you like, or dislike, about them?
- Was the setting interesting in itself? Would you like to know more about it?

Which character interested you the most?
- Is that character the most important in the story? Or is it really about someone else?
- Which character(s) didn’t you like?
- Did any of the characters remind you of people you know?
- Or remind you of characters in other books?

Was there anyone not mentioned in the story but without whom it couldn’t have happened?
- Can you think of any reason why s/he doesn’t appear or isn’t mentioned?
- Would the story have been the same if s/he had appeared or been mentioned?

Who was telling – narrating – the story? Do we know? And how do we know?
Is the story told in the first person (and if so, who is this person)? Or the third person? By someone we know about in the story or by someone we know or don’t know about outside the story?
- What does the person telling the story – the narrator – think or feel about the characters?
  - Does s/he like or dislike them? How do you know?
- Does the narrator approve or disapprove of the things that happen and that the characters do? Do you approve or disapprove of them?

Think of yourself as a spectator. With whose eyes did you see the story? Did you only see what one character in the story saw, or did you see things sometimes as one character saw them, and sometimes as another and so on?
- Were you as it were, inside the head of one of the characters, only knowing what s/he knew, or did the story take you inside a number of characters?

Did we ever get to know what the characters were thinking about? Were we ever told what they were feeling? Or was the story told all the time from outside the characters, watching what they did and hearing what they said, but never knowing what they were thinking and feeling?
- When you were reading the story, did you feel it was happening now? Or did you feel it was happening in the past and being remembered? Can you tell me anything in the writing that made you feel like that?
- Did you feel as if everything was happening to you, as if you were an observer, watching what was happening but not part of the action?
- If you were an observer, where were you watching from? Did you seem to watch from different places – sometimes, perhaps from besides the characters, sometimes from above them as if you were in a helicopter? Can you tell me places in the book where you felt like that?

APPENDIX H

TENTATIVE 90-MINUTE SESSION PLANS††

The Picturebook Project (Tentative 90’ Session Plans)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10’</td>
<td>Greeting—Name Toss</td>
<td>Plush book characters (Pigeon, Pete the Cat, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Activity—Just Like Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-15’</td>
<td>Ask: What is a book? How do you recognize a book? What is a book? What do you do with a book? After each picturebook shared reading in subsequent sessions, ask &quot;Do we have any new information to add to our chart about picturebooks? Read aloud A Book or Book.&quot;</td>
<td>Chart paper; Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Review of the rules. (i.e., Be kind to each other. Care for the books and art supplies. Tidy the room before we leave. Have fun!)</td>
<td>Chart paper; Markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-20’</td>
<td>Read-aloud picturebook This Book Just Ate My Dog! &amp; emoji response. Prepare chart in advance with emojis. Have students describe (agree on) emotion for each emoji. Which emoji would you use to describe how you felt while listening to this book? How did (character) feel while (event)?</td>
<td>Art supplies; Chart paper featuring emojis with descriptive labels (to be added based on child participants’ agreed-upon responses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-15’</td>
<td>Emoji Share (small group)</td>
<td>Large foam dice; Emojis with prompts; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-15’</td>
<td>McKenna &amp; Kear’s (1990) survey</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Closing—Whoa, Wee! Wooo!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Greeting—Name Toss w/ 1 object</td>
<td>Plush book characters (Pigeon, Pete the Cat, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10’</td>
<td>Activity—Dramatic Exaggeration (Challence students to think of something amazing they could do with a book. Begin by modeling: “I used this book to imagine an enchanted forest where I rode upon a unicorn to defeat a villain.”)</td>
<td>Large book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-45’</td>
<td>Read-aloud picturebook, Open Very Carefully &amp; Tell Me questions Then ask, &quot;Why do we share what we think, wish, and feel when reading picturebooks with others? Why/what do we think about what we read in a book? List things we think, wish, and feel about and (multimodal) brainstorm ways to respond to PBs on anchor chart.</td>
<td>Notebooks (introduce with The Book That Zack Wrote); Art supplies; Chart paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†† These tentative plans received IRB approval. See Table 4-2 for itemization of actual session activities, picturebooks read-aloud, and child participants in attendance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-25'</td>
<td>Activity—Book creatures. “Select a used book to make a book creature. Does it have arms, legs, fangs, horns, hair? is it scary? Kind? Angry? Cuddly? Use the book as part of the creature’s body. Draw your design in your notebook first. Then, you may make your creature.”</td>
<td>An assortment of used books and art supplies; Clipboard w/ recorders; Notebooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Closing — Woof! Woof! Woof!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Session 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Greeting—Name Toss w/ 2 objects</td>
<td>Plush book characters (Pigeon, Pete the Cat, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10'</td>
<td>Activity—That’s Not A Book</td>
<td>Chart Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 25-30' | Read-aloud picturebook *The Book That Eats People & Tell Me questions* + Small-Group Responses  
Review response chart. Small groups/individuals will select 1 way to respond. Before dismissing, have them say aloud response choice. Upon completion, share with whole group. | Chart Paper; Notebooks; Chart paper from Session 2; Clipboard w/ recorders; |
| 5'     | Idea check-in (Art supply-product pairs) “Share w/ your partner/group what you hope to do today while finishing your book creature.” | Art supply-product pairing index (picture) cards.                                    |
| 25-30' | Continue book creatures. Then, invent new uses for books based on Activity. Early finishers may explore/read other *metapicturebook titles & respond.* | Drawing paper; Art supplies; Clipboard w/ recorders; Notebooks                       |
| 10'    | Closing—Share book creatures.                                                     |                                                                                     |

**Session 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Greeting — Snowball Fight [paper wads]</td>
<td>Recycled paper; Markers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 30-35' | Read-aloud picturebook *Please, Open This Book!* & Tell Me questions + Small-Group Responses  
Review response chart. Small groups/individuals will select 1 way to respond. Before dismissing, have them say aloud response choice. Upon completion, share with whole group. | Chart Paper; Chart paper from Session 2; Clipboard w/ recorders; Add to Chart from Session 1 of books of different formats and sizes/shapes, including possible review of these titles: *Who What Where?, The Book With No Pictures, The Rabbit Problem, Open Me...I’m A Dog, The Story Starts Here* (Affordances—format) |
| 5'     | Read aloud This is Not A Book. Review Session 1 chart. “Today you will either make a book invention with a used book or draw the plans for your book invention. Be sure to give your invention a name.” |                                                                                     |
| 5'     | Brainstorm book inventions. Early                                                  | Clipboard w/ recorders; Art supplies; Notebooks                                   |
### Session 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Greeting—Good morning! (with props) &lt;br&gt; <em>Select prop. Say “I am a ___ based on prop.” Class responds, Good morning ___.</em></td>
<td>Notebooks, Art supplies; Chart paper w/ dice “key”; Small groups’ dice “key” pages; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20’</td>
<td>Read-aloud picturebook, <em>Is There A Dog In This Book? &amp; Tell Me questions</em> &lt;br&gt; + Small-Group Responses to Roll Dice.</td>
<td>Notebooks; Art supplies; Chart paper w/ dice “key”; Small groups’ dice “key” pages; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20’</td>
<td>In small groups, explore other pop-up and/or lift-the-flap picturebooks. Prompt: &lt;br&gt; <em>What do you notice?</em> &lt;br&gt; <em>What do you see?</em> &lt;br&gt; <em>What do you wonder?</em> &lt;br&gt; <em>What do you think?</em> &lt;br&gt; <em>What do you feel?</em> or small groups may choose Tell Me or Roll dice to share aloud responses to selected pop-up, toy, or lift the flap picturebooks</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorder; Notebooks; Other picturebook selections may include: <em>Remarkable Animals</em>, <em>The Book With A Hole</em>, <em>Book-O-Beards</em>, <em>Book-O-Masks</em>, <em>Book-O-Hats</em>, <em>Book-O-Teeth</em>, <em>The Game of Sculpture</em> or <em>The Game of Shadows</em>, <em>Zoo Faces</em>, <em>Trailing Paper Poetry Pop-Up</em>, <em>One Red Dot</em> or <em>600 Black Spots</em>, <em>Dear Zoo</em>, <em>Peek-A-Who, Small Smaller Smallest</em>, and <em>Find the Dots</em> (Affordances—Reader actions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40’</td>
<td>Create pop-up or lift the flap illustration</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders; Art supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Share pop-up or sculptural creations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Greeting—Hullabaloo</td>
<td>Chart paper; Small groups’ dice “key” pages; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20’</td>
<td>Read-aloud picturebook, <em>How This Book Was Made</em> or <em>This Is My Book</em> &amp; Tell Me questions &lt;br&gt; + Small-Group Responses (Roll Dice)</td>
<td>Chart paper; Small groups’ dice “key” pages; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15’</td>
<td>Introduce text-creation. <em>In two minutes, how many book ideas can you brainstorm?</em> Write down as many ideas as you can—1 idea per Post-It note. Then, you’ll share your ideas on the chart paper.</td>
<td>Chart paper; Pencils; Post-It notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15’</td>
<td>Read aloud picturebook, <em>Press Here.</em> &lt;br&gt; <em>Before you brainstorm, think about what your reader might do with your book?</em> &lt;br&gt; Review/add to chart from Session 1.</td>
<td>Chart from Session 1; Notebooks; Other titles to review may include: <em>Tap the Magic Tree</em>, <em>Don’t Push The Button, Look!, Give and Take</em>, <em>Open This Little Book</em>, <em>Warning: Do Not Open This Book!</em>, <em>Tickle Monster, Can You Make A Scary Face?</em> and <em>Alphabet</em> (Affordances—Actions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25’</td>
<td>Brainstorm text/picturebook creation in notebooks. Draw and/or write idea.</td>
<td>Notebooks; Art supplies; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10’</td>
<td>Closing—Zoom, Create visual story from set of sequential illustrations in random order. Each silently takes turn to move 1.</td>
<td>4-12 illustrations from a picturebook (depending on size of child subject-participant sampling)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Session 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Greeting—Hullabaloo</td>
<td>Chart paper; Small groups’ dice “key” pages;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-30’ Read-aloud picturebook <em>Help! We Need A Title! &amp; Tell Me</em> questions</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Small-Group Responses (Roll Dice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10’</td>
<td>Group Brainstorm (Hand up-Pair Up)</td>
<td>Sentence strips;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Summarize your idea for text/picturebook creation into a few</td>
<td>Art supplies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words or picture to put on a sentence</td>
<td>Notebooks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strip. If you are wearing a sentence strip around your head, stay silent.</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other person will add, “Have you thought about…” or “I wonder if…” to your</td>
<td>Prompts typed onto index cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more ideas.” Then, you will revise ideas. Switch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35’</td>
<td>Work on text/picturebook creations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10’</td>
<td>Closing—Finish this story. Each person adds one sentence aloud to make-up story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use prompts from famous opening lines of children’s picturebooks: “Things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are a lot different around since that Unicorn moved in.” “If you take a mouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to…” “In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf.” “A long way out in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the deep blue sea there lived a fish.” “One evening, after thinking it over some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time, Harold decided to go for a walk in the moonlight.” “The sun did not shine,”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“One morning Toad sat in bed.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Greeting—Hullabaloo</td>
<td>Chart paper; Notebooks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-30’ Read-aloud picturebook <em>The Blobfish Book</em> &amp; Tell Me + Small-Group</td>
<td>Chart paper from Session 2;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses Review response chart. Small groups/individuals will select 1 way to</td>
<td>Art supplies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respond. Before dismissing, have them say aloud response choice. Upon</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completion, share with whole group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Idea Check-in (Book Characters)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Share w/ your partner/group what you hope to do today while working on your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>text/picturebook creation.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-45’</td>
<td>Work on text/picturebook creations.</td>
<td>Art supplies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10’</td>
<td>Closing—Collective story</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Greeting—Hullabaloo</td>
<td>4-12 front covers of picturebook (depending on size of child subject participant sampling); Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10'</td>
<td>Activity—Re-imagining Book Covers</td>
<td>Chart paper; Small groups’ dice “key” pages; Clipboard w/ recorders; Notebooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25'</td>
<td>Read-aloud picturebook <em>A Child of Books</em> or <em>The Best Book in the World</em> &amp; Tell Me questions + Small-Group Responses (Roll Dice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Idea Check-in (Book Title &amp; Genre)</td>
<td>Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40'</td>
<td>Work on text/picturebook creations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Closing—Book Races (1—Cannot touch floor; 2—Cannot use hands/feet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Prompts</th>
<th>Resources/Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td>Greeting—Free choice</td>
<td>Names or images of front covers of previously read picturebooks on index cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10'</td>
<td>Activity—What Book Am I? Charades (Review of books read in sessions by acting them out silently to guess title).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10'</td>
<td>Finalize and walk-through exhibit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10'</td>
<td>McKenna &amp; Kear (1990) survey</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15'</td>
<td>Emoji Share (small group)</td>
<td>Large foam dice &amp; Emoji chart; Clipboard w/ recorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15'</td>
<td>Closing—Read-aloud picturebook <em>A Perfectly Messed Up Story</em> (Finish this story, if time permits)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LAURA ANNE HUDOCK

EDUCATION

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Ph.D in Curriculum & Instruction in Language, Culture and Society in Children’s Literature Studies, 2018
M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction in Children’s Literature, 2014

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE
BA in Government & Law with departmental honors, cum laude, 2001

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


TEACHING EXPERIENCE

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Graduate Assistant, College of Education, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, Fall 2014-Summer 2018

- LL ED 491: Language Arts in the Elementary Classroom
- LL ED 400: Teaching Reading in the Elementary School
- LL ED 402: Teaching Children’s Literature
- LL ED 462: The Art of the Picturebook
- LL ED 465: Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults