

**PARENTS WITH TEACHERS RE-AUTHORING THE HOME-SCHOOL INTERFACE:  
A CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY**

by

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**PARENTS WITH TEACHERS RE-AUTHORING THE HOME-SCHOOL  
INTERFACE: A CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY**

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## Abstract

Much of the literature on family involvement and engagement has served to reproduce social inequality by creating and privileging certain representations of parents ignoring the complexities of contemporary definitions of family and ultimately limit productive relationships (Nakagawa, 2000; Turner-Vorbeck & Miller Marsh, 2008). Voices, perspectives and questions of families are often missing from educational research as "it tends to be research *on* parents, rather than research *with* parents" (Pushor, 2007, p. 9).

In an attempt to further contribute to this research void, this dissertation argues that the historically defined home-school interface has socialized parents and teachers into roles within a hierarchical system controlled by positional and institutional power structures. It asks the questions: How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher, and family member participants: (a) foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; (b) impact the interface relations between home and school; and, (c) enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?

Critical participatory action research methodology (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014) created conditions for 25 parents and teachers to join together as co-researchers on five occasions over four months of a school year. Together, they co-created a collective hybrid discursive third space (Gee, 1996; Gutierrez, 2008; Soja, 1996) that invited them to align their respective funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Participants also engaged in iterative processes of conscientization (Freire, 1976) through story, dialogue, and reflections. Pre and post interviews, focus group field notes, participant field notes, and participant journal reflections were created and collected as main sources of data.

Experiencing liminality and *communitas* enabled participants to transform and renegotiate understandings of their roles, positionalities and how they situate each other within the perceived and lived boundaries that define the home-school interface. Teaching and parenting; parenting and teaching converged equally through relational connectivity and metaphoric bridges that developed into a sense of togetherness and trust disrupting previously held institutionalized and unquestioned hegemonic borders, rules and roles. Over time, relationality transformed their Discourse into pedagogical opportunities where home and school literacies merged into moments of lived curricular hybridity in the participant teachers' classrooms.

## **Lay Summary**

This study challenges how parents and teachers have been historically socialized into certain roles and relationships with each other. There has been an abundance of research about the importance of involving parents and family members in their children's education from the view point of what schools determine is best. However, there is limited research where parents have contributed their perspectives as equal partners. Twenty-five teachers and parents co-created a learning community that met on five occasions over four months. During the research gatherings, they shared their stories, experiences, and knowledge through ongoing dialogue and reflection. The questions that guided their dialogue focused on what the impact of such an experience would have on their relationships, identities as parents and teachers, and what impact this would have on children's literacy learning in the participant teachers' classrooms. Research data included pre and post interviews, journals, and field notes from research meetings and school visits.

## **Preface**

### **Ethics Approval**

Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections through the lens of literacy development

This study has been approved by the Behavioural REB of the UBC Okanagan, Research Services Behavioural Research Ethics Board

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## Dedication

*To my parents:*

I learned to read the world through your eyes

A gift you've left behind

It's your love, wonder, and hope that survives

Leading me day after day through life

Away from you in your time...

But with you – always inside.

## **Prologue**

"But most of all, we need to change the story, for in changing the story we change the world." (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p. 221)

## **Maleeka**

It's very different than there, the teacher is very serious, sometimes punishments... We had lots of fear. Some teachers, even they were very strict, but I really appreciate what they had done for us. I feel like they had the really big role in our studies. We used to work more than we played . . . lots of homework and lots of books.

When I hear from parents, "these teachers are strict," I am glad. I like strict teachers. And, they're not strict really here comparing my teachers back home. Kids should listen to their teachers even if it's strict.

We have a proverb . . . like a poem. We say like, the teacher is almost become a prophet. Because he is the highest, because they teach us, because they make us to be human only. So he's almost a prophet. So they deserve a lot. (Maleeka, Pre-Inquiry Interview)

When Maleeka<sup>1</sup> enters a space she brings with her a gentle quietness and grace that is both hard to go unnoticed but also hard to notice if one is not predisposed to attending carefully as people enter and exit one's world. Maleeka's headscarf frames her expressive eyes and if you are lucky enough, her smile welcomes you warmly into wanting to know more about her and her story. Maleeka is mother of two children who are gifted with multiple languages, cultural and social ways of experiencing the world that differ from what is considered privileged and taken up

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<sup>1</sup> Maleeka, Kim, and Gwen are pseudonyms chosen by these three participants.



in schools as colonial institutions based in predominantly Eurocentric school curricula (Giroux, 1996).

## **Kim**

Whenever a parent asks to meet, I always have a feeling of dread in the pit of my stomach. What did I do? What have I not noticed? Most of the time I have worried for no reason but every so often I still get blindsided by something that just guts me.

It takes me awhile to recover from an attack and I find that even if everything is sorted out, I never feel comfortable or truly trust that parent again . . . Once bitten, twice shy. To me that is the reason why teachers don't want parents around.

I still have my guard up whenever a parent asks to meet. Although most parents are lovely, as human beings, we often focus on the negative. It's hard to let those experiences go. (Journal entry, March 2)

Kim brings with her a quiet confidence and an openness to listen and learn from others based on her years of experience in schools, but also internationally in the world. Her love of culture is made evident in artifacts from her travels displayed around her classroom, as well as in her fashion accessories. Colorful, quiet, reserved and thoughtful. She takes her love of travel, languages and service to others abroad with her into her practice as a teacher. Kim thinks deeply and enters into conversations attuned to and mindful of other voices beyond her own. Having been in the same school for several years, families want their children to be in her classroom. Kim and Maleeka's worlds overlap this school year as they share Maleeka's child.

## **Gwen**

My husband and I believe that we are the primary educators for our boys and we believe that school actually supplements what we are doing at home. I just really view myself as the primary educator.

Volunteering is really important and my boys love seeing me around the school, seeing me volunteering. Putting value into the school by volunteering is really important for our family.

I feel like families' number one should back up what teachers are doing because I believe that every teacher is coming from a place of heart and service...servant hearted. Families have to back up teachers. (Pre-Inquiry Interview)

Gwen bursts into a space with energy that invites attention, curiosity, and inspires joy. Her eyes, smile and voice all sparkle simultaneously making herself known immediately as someone with a story to tell. A statuesque mother of three young sons: invested, engaged, present, creative, busy, interested—a force to be reckoned with. Her children's home lifeworld and school world overlap and intersect as she navigates together with them daily between home and school with ease and confidence. Home mirrors school and school echoes home. Gwen mediates their worlds ensuring symmetry of language, expectations, and practices. One of Gwen's children is in Kim's class this year.

These three women came together in our research space as a threesome with differing perspectives, worldviews, social capital and identities in their roles within the home-school interface. All three entered our research space accompanied by their own lived experiences, expectations, perspectives and personal stories of school. They each brought with them stories,

memories, and reflections that influenced their positionality on the role of teacher and parent and how these roles are lived within the home-school interface.

Maleeka, Kim, and Gwen are joined by 22 other co-researcher participants' voices to tell this critical participatory action research story. The research story represents a leap of faith into the unknown and a collective willingness of courageous parents and teachers to be vulnerable and take risks together in a co-created space that challenged and blurred traditional boundaries that mark the borders of the home-school interface. This is a new story that hopes to change a small part of the world.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background and Rationale**

School cultures tend to be shaped by technocratic narratives. These narratives position teachers as the experts who possess the techniques and understandings to fix students' lack of skills and knowledge. Families in these narratives have a secondary place in this hierarchical construction. For instance, a technocratic perspective may not value indigenous or local families' knowledge systems, understanding of ability and views about schooling. (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010, p. 661)

There is a history of theoretical value placed on what happens within the interface between home and school. Yet in actual practice it continues to be a contested site of tension (Epstein, 2011; McWilliam, Maxwell, & Sloper, 1999). The interface between home and school has traditionally been hierarchically constructed, with good intentions that often do not translate into meaningful relationships between families and teachers (Allen, 2007; Harris, Andrew-Power, & Goodall, 2010; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Pushor, 2007). Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) contend that educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes, and fears about each other that hinder their coming together to promote children's education. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) describes the majority of teachers as having relationships with parents that are defensive and formulaic and who look to institutional bureaucracy to shield or buffer them from what they see as intrusions from families.

Both Maleeka's and Gwen's children bring into their school experience, lifeworld identities (Habermas, 1984) and literacies that have been informed by their familial values and world views. Their school world also helps shape their developing identities influenced by layers

of complexities informed by policies, practices, structures, relationships, biases and beliefs that may either echo or conflict with those of their lifeworld.

This study is framed around first exploring and better understanding the divide that the literature suggests is inherent in the way educators and parents have historically coexisted. It then explores what happens when a counter narrative rewrites the taken-for-granted script that has shaped the way home and school have historically interfaced (Giroux, 1996; Henderson et al., 2007; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Kreider, Caspe, & Hiatt-Michael, 2013; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Miller Marsh, & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010). Through a critical participatory action research methodology co-creation of a third space explored what would happen when parents and teachers who shared a child within a school year came together as equal knowledgeable participants contributing their funds of personal and professional knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Soja, 2011). Once the space developed and evolved through the research process, participants were able to inquire into questions around children's literacy development and how their interactions might influence the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1996/2005a) in the teacher participant's classrooms.

### **1.1.1 Researcher perspective and assumptions: Why this; why me; why now?**

Story . . . becomes a tool to explore memory and history, helping us to make connections with the way that our past created our present . . . . Deeply personal stories become vehicles of critical consciousness. By problematizing aspects of our stories we tease out the political connections with the structural forces that have shaped our experience and contributed to the identities we have assumed . . . . Stories are fragments of the multiple contexts that created them. Stories offer potential for change by working on this past-present-future dimension. (Lewith & Springett, 2014, pp. 111-112)

I like to believe if we are open to possibility, then stories waiting to be told will find us. It is therefore my belief this research narrative has been years in the making; waiting to be lived and told. This research process has helped me come to realize the privileges I have been afforded in my education as a white Canadian-born English speaking woman. My various positions as an educator in the same school district for three decades include being a primary teacher, learning disabilities consultant, literacy intervention teacher, early learning teacher coach and consultant and new teacher mentor, as well as instructor within my university's teacher preparation program. My identity growing up and in each of these positions has been strongly influenced and shaped by biases associated with colonial institutional values and world views. In my own early years, my first language and cultural heritage (second generation Ukrainian) and socio-economic background (low income family farm) were positioned as inferior and secondary to the hierarchical Eurocentrism that permeated how education was constructed in my school experiences from primary grades to my first university degree. My eventual role and positionality in society as a teacher continued to be shaped through these same hegemonic filters and lenses. How could I not continue to grow with the identity that I was socialized into unless somehow challenged and disrupted? My research over the last four years has complexified my understandings of education and how it is socially constructed. This process of search and research has served to both surface my positionality and disrupt my worldview and to use my stories as starting points for change.

### **1.1.2 Challenge and disruption: The power in “should.”**

This personal journey of inquiry was sparked in a moment that at the time caught me off guard, then continued to agitate and linger in my thinking. I give this moment credit for igniting this dissertation journey.

About ten years ago I co-authored a family early literacy program to be used in every elementary school in the school district where this research study occurred based on the premise of supporting families to prepare their pre-school aged children for school. The messaging and assumptions within the tone of the program came from a perceived systemic need to impart necessary information to parents about learning activities their children would benefit from if conducted in their homes prior to kindergarten. In my role at the time, I delivered several of these parent information sessions in different schools based on the assumption that parents and families needed to be told what to do with their children to prepare them for school literacy learning. At one particular moment after delivering a talk and inviting questions, a parent put up her hand and thanked me for the information followed by a recommendation: "Try not to use the word 'should' so much." This stopped me in my tracks, made me pause and take notice: Do we as a system and do we as educators "should" on families? Or was it just me? What do we expect from families in our role as teachers? How are we expected to communicate with them? Where do these expectations come from? Why did I still have so many questions about the home-school interface after being a teacher for over 30 years? Why had I never previously questioned these biases and assumptions?

Little did I know at the time how this moment would shape, define and pool together so many more moments that collectively divided my journey into "before and after this"—this was to be my starting line. Moments from my past began to further illuminate: my father challenging my third grade teacher when I came home with a bruise resulting from a blow to my hand when math was not making sense; a high school teacher changing my name because it was not representative enough of my culture; a line of parents at the back of my second grade classroom observing the new teacher just hired on her first day of teaching; knots in my stomach before

every parent-teacher conference cycle as sets of parents visited me for 15 minutes listening dutifully while I told them all I knew about their child at school; sitting at dozens of meetings with a school psychologist telling parents their child is “disabled” because of not measuring up according to IQ testing and school learning criteria; and, stories of children being excluded from support programs because their parents would not “cooperate” with the school. All of these moments began to add up and speak to each other leading me to further wonder what forces define the interface between home and school and the relationships that manifest within.

These moments are also accompanied by other lived experiences where family members join their pre-school aged children in school-located StrongStart programs where they enter, exit and navigate the school landscape with ease and comfort. Witnessing manifestations of reciprocity where parent or other caring adult from a child's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992), child and teacher engage in togetherness stories of and with each other in formal school spaces. These stories and counter-stories of family members and parents moving in and out of the school landscape have shaped my perspective as a researcher as Ledwith and Springett (2014) state: "Our stories mark the beginning of the transformative process; they are the basis of our new stories" (p. 125). This work found me. Selective moments from my past stepped forward to help coax, pave and propel this research path.

## **1.2 Purpose and significance**

Educational theory and research reveal the complicated, ineffective, and often conflict-ridden relationships inherent within the interface between families and educators (Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999; E. J. Martin & Hagan-Burke, 2002; Pushor, 2007).

Educators are members of what Gee (2015) refers to as a larger Discourse. "Big D Discourse" theory is the identity kit from which membership in a group is determined (p. 2).



Membership within the Discourse of educators determines ways in which its socially-based and derived group conventions give license to teachers to embody specific identities and enact certain practices. Therefore, when educators as members of a Discourse live out their identities and practices in a certain way, they become normalized and taken for granted.

The literature on family engagement and involvement in education is abundant and clear indicating that when educators lack knowledge and skills in understanding and intentionally enacting effective and sincere family engagement practices with their diverse students' families, children's long term life chances are compromised (Constantino, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards et al., 1999; Epstein, 2009, 2011; Feiler, 2010; Harris et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Martin & Hagan-Burke, 2002; Pushor, 2007). Historical representations of families in the Discourse of school-related policies and texts have demonstrated limited opportunities for family members and teachers to come together for meaningful and substantive discussions (Auerbach, 1997b; Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Nakagawa, 2000; Turner-Vorbeck & Miller Marsh, 2008).

When families<sup>1</sup> of children do not interact with educators, it is often viewed as lack of value for education and presumed to be indicative of disinterest and apathy (Edwards et al., 1999; Delpit, 2006; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Patterson & Baldwin, 2001; Pushor, 2007, 2017; Schultz, 2010). The Discourse on family involvement and engagement has served to reproduce social inequality by creating and privileging certain representations of parents that ignore the complexities of contemporary definitions of family and

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<sup>1</sup> The term *family* is used to broadly reference those adults who provide immediate care for children and, therefore, interact with the school as such, unless referencing research that uses different terminology (Constantino, 2005; McWayne, 2015; Perry, 2010). In this research study, family member participants were all parents, therefore “parents” will be used as their descriptor.

ultimately limit productive relationships (Nakagawa, 2000; Turner-Vorbeck & Miller Marsh, 2008). Therefore, the voices and questions of families are often missing from educational research and dialogue about how to support children's learning in schools (Allen, 2010; Cairney, 2000; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Edwards et al., 1999; Ippolito, 2010; Miller-Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010; Norton-Meier & Whitmore, 2013; Nutbrown, Hannon, & Morgan, 2005; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; Whalley, 2012).

Pushor (2007) describes a further gap in knowledge regarding the benefits and potential reciprocity of connecting home and school for parents, families and communities, but especially for the children they share. Little research has been conducted that addresses what these benefits might be, how they might occur, or how parents, families, and communities may be strengthened by them. Pushor further contends: "From an educational perspective alone, this knowledge could inform parent engagement practices, continuous improvement frameworks, and intersectoral initiatives" (p. 10). Pushor (2007) also raises another area of research potential that examines parent engagement through the eyes and experiences of parents since so much of the research and literature that is available gives educators' perspectives of how families are engaged with their children's schooling. She further explains that: "It tends to be research *on* parents, rather than research *with* parents" (Pushor, 2007, p. 9, original emphasis). Therefore, participatory research with parents and teachers together as equal contributors has not received much attention in the literature.

### **1.3 Context and theoretical rationale**

This is a story about a group of 25 volunteer participants including 12 kindergarten to grade four teachers, two teacher candidates, and 11 parents partnering together to explore the home-school interface over a period of five research gatherings (focus groups) which occurred

between March and June of a school year. The participants were all from the same large school district in southern British Columbia representing eight out of a possible 31 different elementary schools set in diverse communities located in both urban and rural settings. Research gatherings were held in a neutral location in a meeting room at a local coffee café.

Having worked in this school district for 28 years in various roles provided me with prior knowledge and understandings of the context, therefore, I have positioned myself as an insider researcher in collaboration with other insiders (Greene, 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Insider research in the social sciences has been defined as study of one's own social group of which I possesses "intimate knowledge of community and its members" (Greene, 2014, p. 2). Parent participants in this study are also positioned as insiders alongside their teacher partners because they share common goals in caring for and educating their children. Both parents and teachers bring equally important funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992) to the research. Funds of knowledge, according to González et al. (2005), are the unique lifeworld knowledge resources that originate within one's primary Discourse (typically family) and are shared as people gain membership in secondary Discourse communities of belonging (Gee, 2015). Advantages of being an insider researcher includes "expediency of access" (Chavez, 2008, p. 482) to participants, as well membership in a Discourse that also shares professional funds of knowledge (Gee, 2008, 2015). Disadvantages include having assumptions based on familiarity of the context, potential for insider bias, and the negotiation of power inherent in my role as leading the research as part of a doctoral program.

Research gatherings were grounded in agreed upon group norms that were articulated at the beginning of each get together. The research space took shape through processes that invited participants to align their respective funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) regarding their

children, their children's emerging literacy development and their lived experiences in their respective roles as parent or teacher or in some cases both. Literacy, defined socio-culturally much like funds of knowledge, is deeply embedded in the social processes of family and cultural life within the home and community environments (Bakhtin, 1981; D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Cairney, 1995, 2008; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Cairney (1995) suggests that since literacy (as defined socioculturally) is central to the learning process of all children, it is a logical focus around which to build positive relational partnerships with parents based on an appreciation that home is both the beginning and foundation of literacy and learning for children.

Both big D Discourse theory (Gee, 1996, 2008, 2015) and Third Space theory (Pahl & Kelly, 2005; Pane, 2007; Soja, 1996, 2014) were used to inform the conditions of the research process design within a critical participatory action research methodology. Theoretical perspectives on third space are derived from Bhabha's (1994) concept of "in-between spaces" that live in the "overlap and displacement of domains of difference" (p. 2). Soja (1996) describes space as socially produced and an integral part of all social relationships. Discourses are located in socially produced spaces (Gee, 2008, 2015). Third space theory attempts to explain and resolve the tensions and lack of productivity that may arise when different socio-cultural institutional identities and roles come into contact including those with similar goals (Cook, 2005; Pane, 2007). Within the home-school interface exists the potential for multiple Discourses to speak to each other and share differing worldviews. Membership in a Discourse community brings with it varying degrees of cultural capital and funds of knowledge. The *Community Cultural Wealth* model described by Yosso (2005) supports the idea that underrepresented children and families hold various forms of cultural capital including aspirational, social,

linguistic, familial, navigational, and resistance capital. Yosso's (2005) model "reconceptualizes and broadens the idea of what capital can mean in different cultural communities" (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 152) aligning it more closely with the funds of knowledge approach than with Lareau's original notion of cultural capital.

McKenna and Millen (2013) and Kroeger and Lash (2011) agree the new face of research within the home-school interface be relational—about family presence and voice. It is research that invites socio-constructivist inquiry by positioning family members and teachers on more equal social footing—each holding important knowledges and social practices (such as literacy practices). A participatory action research methodology lends itself to creating the conditions for discursive spaces to be co-created in relational social constructionist ways (Gergen, 2001; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Young & Collin, 2004).

#### **1.4 Paradigmatic assumptions, research questions and approach**

My thinking and research intentions are an assemblage of critical theory, sociocultural and social justice perspectives that value difference as the foundation for questioning institutional power structures. My view leans on the at-promise and resiliency paradigms (Davis, 1996; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Lopez & Louis, 2009; Sebolt, 2018) which view children and families' language, literacies, culture, history and background as assets and resources from which curriculum can be generated and enriched. Yosso (2005) contributes to a my definition of culture: "Some research has equated culture with race and ethnicity, while other work clearly has viewed culture through a much broader lens of characteristics and forms of social histories and identities" (p. 75). For the purposes of this discussion, culture is not seen as a static homogenous entity, but rather is understood as a hybrid collection of dynamic, emergent and interactional socio-cultural practices experienced by families in their daily processes of living (Llopart &

Esteban-Guitart, 2018). Furthermore, a strength orientation towards diversity of culture positions families positively as generative manifestations of their "historically accumulated funds of knowledge" (Llopart & Esteban, 2018, p. 148). This perspective challenges the historical positioning of school and teachers as expert knowledge holders who use social, linguistic, religious, economic or cultural diversities as sources of deficiency within an institution that has privileged homogeneity (Delpit, 2006; Goodman, 2001; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Manyak, & Dantas, 2010; Payne, 2006; Schultz, 2010).

This dissertation takes up the position that the historically defined home-school interface has socialized parents and teachers into roles within a hierarchical structure controlled by hegemonic positional and institutional power structures. This study is both interpretative and participatory since the dissertation is my interpretation of the data created during the course of the research study that was designed with the ultimate goal of achieving a PhD degree. Beyond the motivation to earn a degree was also perhaps even more importantly a wish to leave contributory traces of goodness and justice behind in the wake of the research study.

Critical participatory action research (PAR) informed the research design (Creswell, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; MacDonald, 2012; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Swantz, 2013). Critical PAR as a methodology presented itself as the best fit for this study because of its fundamental commitment to collaboration and partnership with research participants. As Brydon-Miller and Maguire, (2009) contend: "PAR is a deeply relational approach to knowledge creation and social change...knowledge is always created in the context of human relationships. Research, then, is a social process, not an autopsy" (p. 87).

Spirals of action were used within Freire's participatory process of conscientization using story, dialogue, problematizing, critical reflection and collective communicative action as a guiding framework (Kemmis et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014). Ledwith and Springett, (2014) emphasize the use of story as a transformative tool within participatory practice that further possibilizes transformative action and change at both the group and individual levels.

Research for practical knowledge that leads to liberating action through participation is based on Freirian notion that all people have the right to be subjects in the world; agency and autonomy is restored through a mutual and reciprocal process that draws people together in relations of dignity and respect, as co-researchers in the process of change, questioning and making sense of the world in order to act together for a common good—an approach that is committed to working with people not on people with the explicit intention of equalizing power relations and bringing transformative change. (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p. 200).

Dual purposes of action research include the production of practical knowledge found useful to people in the conduct of their day to day lives as well as contributions to greater conversations taking place in academic and practitioner communities (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Therefore, the questions that both grounded and gave this study direction attended to the practical with the added hope to contribute to larger conversations beyond the study itself.

The research questions that guided this study were: How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants:

- foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development;
- impact the interface relations between home and school; and,

- enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?

Practices as defined by Kemmis et al. (2014) are social human activities (doings) understood through characteristic discourses (sayings) in arrangements of relationships (relatings). (“Practice” used throughout this dissertation relies on this definition.) These research questions guided the search for a unity of praxis integrating theory and practice to support participants to transform themselves, their practices, their understandings of their practices, and conditions under which they practice (Kemmis et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014).

In order to explore, inquire and attempt to answer these questions, in-depth data was created and collected through pre- and post-inquiry interviews, participant journals, researcher and participant field notes and a collaboratively created visual artifact. A constant comparative method was used to code, categorize and develop theoretical concepts based on crystallization of multiple data sources (Charmaz, 2014; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

## **1.5 Overview of Chapters**

I begin in Chapter 2 with an overview of the theoretical lenses that guided my research from inception to writing this dissertation. Chapter 3 describes the critical participatory action research methodological framework and the data analysis process. This framework facilitated a cyclical process for participants to engage in storying, dialoguing, problematizing, and critical reflecting on their lived experiences. This process led to forms of collective, communicative action with others through a wider context. Chapter 4 synthesizes the data to answer the research question: "How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants impact the interface relations between home and school?" Findings are revealed using four metaphors surfaced from the data representing the temporality inherent in a participatory process that describes and interprets transformation over time. Chapter 5 answers



the other two research questions: "How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; and, how will the lived curriculum be enriched in the teacher participants' classrooms?" Findings reveal that an expanded understanding of literacies led to reimagining the resource potential that lives within a home-school interface that is nurtured reciprocally and relationally. Chapter 6 is a discussion of the findings that provides a creative and interpretative perspective on implications of this study's participatory process and research experience. The conclusion in Chapter 7 provides a reflective and reflexive perspective on how the research story came to be told and what implications have been illuminated.

The results of this research process offer a challenge to the more common official technocratic positioning of teachers and families within the home-school interface that for so long has dominated the official narratives embedded in educational research, policy, practice and Discourse around why and how to best work together (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010; Peters & Lankshear, 1996; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Peters and Lankshear, (1996) propose that it is: "the little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives" (p. 2) that deserve illumination. This little research story, co-authored by diverse voices brought together to challenge the past narratives that influenced their identities and practices, hopes to shed light on such a counter-narrative (Peters & Lankshear, 1996).

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework**

### **Introduction**

Powerful theoretical concepts can function as lenses that enable us to see our everyday experiences in new ways and thus lead to very practical changes in our behavior . . . .

Like a new pair of prescription glasses, they sharpen our vision and allow us to see things that we did not see before. (Manyak & Dantas, 2010, p. 6)

### **2.1 Shaping my Narrative of the Home-School Interface**

The literature regarding how home and school, parents and teachers have lived together within the home-school interface reveals predominantly complicated, ineffective, and often conflict-ridden relationships (Constantino, 2005; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Edwards et al., 1999; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; E. J. Martin & Hagan-Burke, 2002; Pushor, 2007, 2017; Robinson & Harris, 2014). As a teacher of over 30 years, my personal lack of confidence in meaningfully connecting with parents and families of my students is echoed and reinforced in the literature. When educators lack knowledge and skills in understanding and intentionally enacting effective and sincere family engagement practices with their diverse students' families, children's long term life chances are compromised (Constantino, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards et al., 1999; Epstein, 2009, 2011; Feiler, 2010; Harris et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; E. J. Martin & Hagan-Burke, 2002; Pushor, 2007). There exists an abundance of research that describes educators as positioning parents and families who do not actively and visibly engage in their children's schooling as disinterested, apathetic and uncooperative towards supporting their children's learning in school (Crozier & Davies; 2007; Delpit, 2006; Edwards et al., 1999; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Patterson & Baldwin, 2001; Pushor, 2007, 2013; Robinson & Harris, 2014; Schultz, 2010).

### **2.1.1 Sensitizing lenses**

My search through the literature became a conversation accompanied by memories and stories of my own past lived experiences as a child, a student and a teacher. At the same time I seemed to be attracting stories from the field told by other voices that were also finding resonance in the literature. Through the lens of both social constructionism and constructivism (Moll, 2014; G. Simon, 2018; Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978; Young & Collin, 2004) and critical theory (Freire, 1986; Giroux, 1987; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2009) appeared clarity, meaning and resonance that helped influence and shape my world view. A world view that ultimately paved my research path towards wondering what might happen if a new space was co-created with teachers and parents that confronted and disrupted the historical and institutional boundaries under which the home-school interface has been lived and defined.

Within the well-researched and documented significance of home-school connections lives a larger discussion involving school improvement and student academic achievement. I came to realize I had been socialized as a teacher and my practices were derived from perspectives based in positivism. Achievement, standards, rankings, school improvement and effectiveness nested in deficit discourses and pathologizing of those who did not fit within conceptions of what the literature references as the white middle class norms that permeate the historical archetype of school (Constantino, 2005; Edwards et al., 1999; Giroux, 1996; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Pushor, 2007; Robinson & Harris, 2014; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001). Social and cultural capital of the middle and upper classes typically privileged within the Discourse of school are also:

considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society. If one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, one could then access the knowledges of

the middle and upper class and the potential for social mobility through formal schooling . . . . Schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help 'disadvantaged' students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital. (Yosso, 2005, p. 70)

Yosso's explanation on what capital is privileged in schools also speaks to Lareau's (2000) notion of social and cultural capital. Lareau (2000) asserts that families and their children who possesses knowledge portfolios that align closely with the Discourse of school are at an advantage. Their capital toolkits or portfolios (linguistic, social, experiential, and cultural) more seamlessly transition into school's social and academic ways of being when their home lifeworld is closely reflected within the expectations of the school (Gee, 2004). Children with such knowledge portfolios tend to be more school-like and, therefore, more successful in what school asks of them. Families of these children are also more comfortable in measuring up to the expectations placed on them by school. This worldview has been influenced and shaped by historically established institutional norms and positionally-powered Discourses that have not changed much since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Baskwill, 2013; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Constantino, 2005; Edwards et al., 1999; Gee, 2015; Keyser, 2006; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Lopez & Stoelting, 2010; Pushor, 2007; Ridnour, 2011). Yosso's (2005) *Community Cultural Wealth Model* serves to disrupt this worldview by offering a new perspective that invites acceptance of and value in school's learning more about the cultural capital that accompany diverse families and communities.

Yosso's (2005) model echoes other counter-narratives (Peters & Lankshear, 1996) living in the literature. These sociocultural and ethnographic perspectives attend to interrelationships between people, culture, place, and their practices and draw attention away from the more

positivistic influenced school improvement motivations for engaging parents in their children's schooling (Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Delpit, 2006; Edwards, 2009; Edwards, Pleasants & Franklin, 1999; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010; Pushor, 2007, 2013; Pushor & Murphy, 2004). In the field of education, a sociocultural and ethnographic perspective attends mindfully to look at children, families and teachers:

holistically, as having complex multifaceted lives both inside and outside of school . . . and challenges teachers to replace the impulse to make quick negative judgements about students' home lives with willingness to recognize, appreciate and build on their diverse experiences and resources. (Manyak & Dantas, 2010, p. 8)

Probably the most influential theoretical concept that I discovered was *funds of knowledge* in the work of González, Moll, and Amanti (2005). Funds of knowledge focuses attention on the unique resources that diverse families possess and pass on to their children, rather than focusing on knowledges, resources and experiences that families lack when compared with what the institution of school privileges most. Within the concept of funds of knowledge, I found a worldview that disrupted the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1993) and the subservient positioning of parents and families within the home-school interface. This perspective offered me language to rewrite my own story as a teacher researcher with a motivation to influence a much bigger conversation in the field of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In my work as a primary teacher and literacy intervention teacher, I had unknowingly been enacting academic and utilitarian literacy instructional approaches that view literacy learning as a model of mastering individual reading and writing print skills (Freire & Macedo, 1987). My past work in family literacy also drew from the same epistemology that focused on

educating parents on how they *should* embody school-like literacy learning in their homes prior to and throughout their children's schooling.

From within the concept of funds of knowledge appears the expanded notion of what literacy learning and literacy practice mean. Literacy is no longer simply viewed as a cognitive skill, rather also as a cultural practice (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Cairney, 1995; Gee, 1990; Manyak & Dantas, 2010). Literacy learning through a sociocultural and socio-constructivist lens is a part of culture; seen as a complex process that involves social relationships between the learner and members of a particular socio-cultural context (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2000, 2012; Cairney, 1995; Gee, 2008; Hannon, 1995; Kreider et al., 2013; Li, 2010; Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Street, 1993). Street (1993) defines literacy practices as being shaped by different social and cultural norms, therefore also reflecting variations from one cultural group to another.

The seminal research of Heath (1983), Purcell-Gates (1996), Taylor (1997), and Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) changed the landscape in understanding and appreciating how literacy is not just instruction that happens in school, but is "deeply embedded in the social processes of family life" with children learning to "read and write as part of their family histories" (Taylor, 1997, p. 92). Through their work, the notion of family literacy as school-centric (Pushor, 2017) program that educates families about literacy learning is challenged and replaced instead with identifying the literacies of families as resources that could become entry points into school curricula that take up culturally responsive pedagogies (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010; Au, 1993, 1998; Cairney, 2002; Dyson, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Li, 2010; McCarthey, 2000; Nutbrown et al., 2005).

Parent involvement and parent engagement are terms used interchangeably within the literature on the significance of making creating partnerships and making connections between home and school (Ferlazzo, 2011; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009; Grolnick & Raftery-Helmer, 2015; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Pushor, 2007, 2010). Ferlazzo (2011) differentiates between the deeper meanings of involve and engage currently widely used in the literature. He makes the distinction between the two definitions by attending to the etymology of the terms:

... the dictionary definitions of *involve* is “to enfold or envelope,” whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is “to come together and interlock.” Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with*. A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners. (p. 12, original emphasis)

Kim and Sheridan (2015) propose a theoretical model called home-school connections that contributes additional language to define parent involvement and engagement beyond the distinction articulated by Ferlazzo (2011). Their theoretical model, called home-school connections defines involvement through the structural approaches or events that schools organize for parents to connect with teachers and be involved in their children's school learning. Relational approaches, on the other hand, are more aligned to how Ferlazzo defines engagement which attends to partnership and equality of voice within the home-school interface. Kim and Sheridan's (2015) theoretical model will be used to further articulate the potentialities in parents and teachers coming together through a sociocultural perspective.

Parent involvement, and/or engagement, and family literacy research are fields that ironically have rarely been brought together, and both need to look at ways that Discourse membership and power relationships serve as powerful factors influencing children's school experiences and ultimately life paths. Both fields have grown exponentially over the past two decades along with disagreement over definitions and practices that live within each (Compton-Lilly & Greene, 2011). Critical perspectives on literacy learning and literacy practices also helps inform a curriculum discourse that attends to opening spaces for learners to tell and question their own stories and experiences. Giroux, in his introduction to Freire and Macedo's (1987) text, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, writes:

A radical theory of literacy needs to be constructed around a dialectical theory of voice and empowerment . . . . How teachers and students read the world . . . . is inextricably linked to forms of pedagogy that can function to either silence and marginalize students or to legitimate their voices in an effort to empower them as critical and active citizens. (p. 19)

Dyson (1993) and Dantas and Manyak (2010) both write about making curriculum permeable by inviting children's lifeworld and home funds of knowledge and literacies to inform and help design school learning experiences. Constructing permeable curriculum relies on finding ways to draw on the cultural, linguistic, place-based and both family as well as parent knowledges (Pushor, 2015) to build upon, extend and make children's developing literacy skills relevant and meaningful. Permeability of curriculum represents "the most practical classroom outcome of learning from and with diverse families" (Dantas & Manyak, 2010, p. 13).

In an effort to become familiar with and draw upon the literature that has ultimately informed my worldview and directed my research has taken me down many theoretical paths and



sometimes unexpected detours that have served to sharpen my vision, solidify my paradigmatic assumptions and truly see things in ways that I had not seen before. What follows is a review of the literature that has informed the path I took in attempting to answer my research questions: How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants: (a) foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; (b) impact the interface relations between home and school; and, (c) enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?

## **2.2 History's Shaping of the Home-School Interface**

### **2.2.1 Grammar of schooling.**

Social and cultural capital along with existing institutional and bureaucratic structures including rigid administrative policies are part of the normative reality also known as the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1993) within which schools and teachers continue to operate (Feiler, 2010; Lareau, 2000; Nakagawa, 2000; O'Connor, 2001). Our classic school curriculum, structures, systems and pedagogies are still designed to meet the needs of the ideal public school student; a one size fits all and standard form. Since schools historically have operated within a white middle class cultural norm which privilege children who bring with them recognizable family and social capital, inequalities between teachers and parents have gone unnoticed and these power relationships are hidden in the way schools function (Giroux, 1996; Graue & Hawkins, 2010; Lareau, 1996; Pushor, 2007; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) describes four shifts in the purpose and aims of education in the past century. The early part of the twentieth century was about assimilation of immigrants into North American life followed by the early to mid-century which focused on adjustment through the progressive education movement. The 1960s through 1970s were about universal

educational access for all. Research and policy about the home-school interface was influenced by ideologies and perspectives that placed school culture and environment as superior to that of home, especially where demographics did not align with white middle class communities (Lareau, 2000; Pushor & Murphy, 2004). Expectations placed on parents and families by schools during these periods was to ensure children were properly fed, dressed and ready to learn in the school system (Robinson & Harris, 2014). The aims of education through the latter part of the twentieth century, often referred to as the era of excellence, assumed that in order to be effective, schools must concentrate on their primary mission—teaching academic skills and content (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2010). Since the 1950s educational policy has positioned families and parents to "serve as home assistants to schools in educating children" (Robinson & Harris, 2014, p. 26).

In order to accomplish the goal of excellence, the discourse within the institutional Discourse around parent support in schools assumes that parents are obligated to help with meeting the school's curricular goals as measured on standardized tests. "If parents do not perform to the school's satisfaction, it becomes the task of schools and teachers to guide disadvantaged or negligent parents" (De Carvalho, 2001, as cited in Robinson & Harris, 2014, p. 26). Today many parent-focused initiatives continue to work from this premise of pathology and deficiency which may explain why schools and teachers continue to echo a presumptive discourse based on family background inadequacy and inferiority (Pushor & Murphy, 2004; Whalley, 2012).

### **2.2.2 Discourse theory: Identity shaping and social belonging.**

Gee (1996, 2015) defines Discourse as a way of being in the world; forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, and social identities. Discourses are mastered through

"enculturation (apprenticeship) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse" (Gee, 1996, p. 139). A Discourse is a sort of identity kit that provides instructions on how to act, talk and take on a particular social role recognizable to others who share membership.

Identity takes shape and form within Discourse membership and people can find belonging in multiple Discourse spaces throughout their varied social experiences. Much in keeping with Gee's (2015) definition of big D Discourse is S. Hall's (1996) definition of cultural identity as a process of ongoing social construction rather than a biological determination (Botelho, Cohen, Leoni, Chow, & Sastri, 2010). Identity is a constant embodiment of historical and social experiences that interweave to construct multiple identities (S. Hall, 1996).

Gee (1996) proposes that: "All Discourses are products of history . . . historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals" (p. 132). Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power, social goods and hierarchical structures in society. Membership within historically shaped Discourses (such as institutions) lead to membership within dominant groups that have access to power and status. Gee's (2015) big D definition of Discourse helps to theorize how institutions, such as schools and those who inhabit them, such as teachers, come to be socialized into accepted ways of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting within as members of that institution. Discourse defines the boundaries between people (who is an insider and who does not belong) creating hierarchies and distribution of social capital and power. Discourses surface certain viewpoints and values at the expenses of others which gives power to certain ways of thinking and being, while marginalizing others. Within the home-school interface exists the potential for multiple Discourses to speak to each other and share differing worldviews. The advantages provided by cultural resources and capital

depends on institutional definitions of what is important (Lareau, 2000). School-privileged Discourses and cultural capital form barriers of membership that marginalize and exclude the values, identities and Discourses of others. The school system Discourse (historically and socially defined) rarely questions its own values and assumptions, which serves to perpetuate its powerful hierarchical and colonial position in society (Mackay, 2003).

Discourse in the literature on parent involvement has been shown to reproduce social inequality as it produces particular representations of parents that interfere with productive relationships (Nakagawa, 2000). The margins that define the space between home and school are written by the historical grammar of schooling which has served to socialize its members into a Discourse that defines their identity, positionality and membership within that space. Institutional Discourse is powerful because it shapes the architecture of relationships and individual identities within those same institutions. Schools, as institutional spaces, have developed a Discourse that has been socially constructed and politically charged in historically and culturally grounded contexts (Cairney, 2008; Giroux, 1996).

Deficit language, thinking and dominant positioning of teacher and school knowledge as superior to home and community knowledge is arguably historically entrenched within the Discourse of school (Giroux, 1996; Pushor, 2007, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Historically, school curriculum in Canada has been enacted as a one way transmission of knowledge built on a "mono-cultural foundation of knowledge...privileged through public education" (Battiste, 2013, p. 161). By critically attending to the inherent biases that help define one's identity and role within a Discourse, people can be made aware and positioned to be able to raise questions about what is taken-for-granted and how one's practices (saying, doing, relating) are influenced by the

status quo. In doing so, individual worldviews and practices might be challenged enough to disrupt and shift that same status quo that defines the Discourse.

### **2.2.3 Socio-cultural considerations: Identity, membership and capital.**

In keeping with Gee's definition of Discourse as shaping and socializing identity, the definition of culture taken up aligns with Freire's anthropological notion of culture. Shor (1993) reflects on Freire's definition of culture as the speech and behavior of everyone in everyday life, and "the action and result of humans in society, the way people interact in their communities, and the addition people make to the world they find" (p. 29). This view of culture also reflects how our world is increasingly more transnationally socially networked. Intersections of global diversities result in hybrid identities constantly being reshaped by a multiplicity of social factors. A more complex view of culture is defined as:

the historical, sociopolitical, and creative product of social practices that reflect people responding to, making sense of, re/organizing, and acting upon the world...culture as not static, isolated, permanent, or bounded, but dynamic, permeable.... Culture is thus learned, and not biologically determined; it is a complex web of power relations enacted at interpersonal, group, and institutional levels. (Botelho et al., 2010, p. 245)

Along with membership in a Discourse comes varying degrees of cultural capital, which according to Bourdieu (1984, 1986) and Lareau (2000) differs with social class. Yosso (2005) further elaborates: "A traditional view of cultural capital is narrowly defined by White, middle class values, and is more limited than wealth—one's accumulated assets and resources" (p. 77). Cultural capital found in Discourse membership plays a central role in societal power relations, as this "provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy" (Gaventa,

2003, p. 6). Cultural and symbolic forms of capital are to a large extent where the causes of inequality are hidden.

School-privileged Discourse takes on dominance within society where membership has been historically pre-determined to marginalize and exclude the values, identities and Discourses of people whose identities have otherwise been shaped. Lareau's (2000) research on social class differences in home-school relationships found that schools have standardized views of the ideal parent and that social and cultural capital determines the manner in which parents interact with schools. For example, Lareau (1996, 2000), Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978, 2003), Feiler (2010) and Robinson and Harris (2014) all use the constructs of social and cultural capital to describe class differences and unequal power structures in how families relate to schools. Working class families' relationships with schools are more independent or separate, with less parent presence at outreach activities and more reluctance to question actions of school personnel. Middle class families are more interdependent with schools, more visibly involved at outreach events and initiate more communication with school personnel. The independence or separateness of working-class families keeps them less visibly involved in the school culture which leads them to relinquish control of their children's education more exclusively to schools. Although both working and middle class parents possess social and cultural capital, some forms of capital are valued more highly by dominant institutions, especially the social capital that aligns with the policies, practices and backgrounds of the educators within schools (Feiler, 2010; Lareau, 1996, 2000; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978, 2003; Payne, 2006; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Traditional institutional school practices and ritualistic occasions that attempt to bring parents in the space between home and school like open houses, parent-teacher conferences and student performances are school determined and dominated. Such school-centric activities do not

allow for meaningful parent to teacher conversation or partnership (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978, 2003; Moles, 1999; Pushor, 2017). The education level, cultural styles, and language of parents typically determines the degree to which they participate in traditional school-centric activities (Pushor, 2017). Robinson and Harris (2014) further explain: "Schools expect specific types of behavior from all parents, yet class-related factors shape parents' approach to involvement that are not always in line with the affluent dispositions and preferences that are valued in schools" (p. 43). Teachers as members of a historically constructed Discourse may view parents' absence at these school outreach activities as an indication of not caring about their children's education. Parents who may have experienced school as uninviting or alienating at some point in their past or currently do not feel valued or welcomed may also feel teachers do not care about them or their children. Gorski (2011) writes about how an ideology of deficiency has led to stereotypes "which paint disenfranchised communities as intellectually, morally, and culturally deficient and deviant" (p. 154). This stereotype is often proliferated within the school Discourse by educators who have been socialized by a deficit hegemonic perspective. When such stereotypes go unquestioned, they become a dominant force in what Gorski calls "mass compliance" by educators (2011, p. 155). Nakagawa (2000), in agreement, suggests that "by taking certain ideas and structures for granted, we cede them with more power . . . and unnoticed power produces instruments of control" (p. 446). In this way, the educational system's Discourse tends not to question the biases inherent in its own values and assumptions. The hegemonic school Discourse around parents, families and their positionality within the home-school interface has sustained and continues to reproduce an omnipotent status quo (Nakagawa, 2000).

"As Mary Douglas (1986) has argued, we allow social institutions (including language) to do much of our thinking for us" (Gee, 1996, p. 77). Lareau (2000) and Gorski (2011) both

contend that even though teachers interpret the degree of parent involvement (as defined by schools) as a reflection of the value parents placed on their children's educational success, all parents valued educational success similarly, but due to the differing social and cultural resources, their promotion of their children's education differed. Unless confronted and contested, socio-culturally shaped Discourse membership leads parents and families to construct differing pathways for interacting with dominant institutions such as schools, as well as teachers interpreting these pathways through historical and institutional pre-existing bias.

#### **2.2.4 Habitus and power.**

Historically, the discontinuities between families and schools are rooted in power and status, inequality and ethnocentrism which has created, for many, marginalization and perpetuation of a discourse on parent involvement that continues to control who gets involved and whose Discourse knowledge, cultural and social capital is valued most (Giroux, 1996; Grumet, 1988; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978; Nakagawa, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Power as defined by Bourdieu (1986) is culturally and symbolically created, and constantly reinforced and perpetuated through what he calls habitus. Both notions of habitus and Discourse theory agree that it is through socialized norms or tendencies that behaviors and thinking are reinforced. Habitus, like membership in a Discourse is created through social processes that lead to patterns of behavior which are transferable from one context to another over time.

Therefore, power not parent incompetence, explains the diverse ways parents interact with schools and reciprocally, how schools position and interact with parents (Delgado-Gaitain, 1991; Feiler, 2010; Gee, 1996; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Both parents and teachers, but especially parents are aware of the power differentials that exist between school personnel and themselves. Positional power, economic and educational social class, professional



expertise and former school failure for parents can all equate to institutional intimidation of families, but especially those who represent poor, working class, linguistically and ethnically diverse families. Professional power comes from the knowledge, expertise and privilege inherent within membership in the institutional Discourses which all contribute to educational inferiority and feelings of powerlessness for parents and families according to their backgrounds (O'Connor, 2001; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Pushor, 2007, 2009; 2010; Robinson & Harris, 2014). When families have fewer resources to draw on in terms of social capital, school contacts, dominant language or their overall habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), they are especially disadvantaged and discriminated against when confronted by school-centric (Pushor, 2017) expectations. Pushor (2007) refers to this hierarchical structure and unidirectional agenda as an "unquestioning system that places educators as holders of knowledge and parents as recipients of their knowledge" (p. 3).

Bourdieu (1986) suggests that it is through habitus and the taken-for-granted ways of interpreting how to furnish the space between home and school that has rendered power relations invisible unless challenged through reflexivity. Navarro, (2006) builds upon the significance of critical reflexivity: "Self-critical knowledge that discloses the sources of power and reveals the reasons that explain social asymmetries and hierarchies can itself become a powerful tool to enhance social emancipation" (pp. 15-16).

## **2.3 Paradigmatic Influences that Shape the Home-School Interface**

### **2.3.1 The school improvement paradigm: Idealizing parents and families.**

The parent involvement literature is deeply embedded in research and discourse around school improvement measured and judged by standardized student academic achievement. The assumptions embedded within parent involvement literature are typically derived from the

school-improvement body of research. These typical assumptions and definitions inform how educators and parents each approach home-school relationships (Nakagawa, 2000).

In the parent involvement paradigm, greater value is placed on student academic achievement and working with families is a way to accomplish the school's ultimate goal of educating children according to societal and ideological established policies and curriculum (McWilliam et al., 1999; Pushor, 2007). Advocates of the school improvement agenda believe that top-down standards provide minimum content requirements that if taught in the same way to all students will result in school improvement (Kincheloe, 2008). Through the lens of this paradigm the educational world has typically been viewed as one homogeneous group reflecting an upper-middle class, white, English-speaking background (Giroux, 1996; Kincheloe, 2008). Parents and families are also viewed through the same homogenous lens and are seen as having a specific role to play in supporting schools to meet their achievement and accountability agendas (Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Drury, 2015). There is an underlying assumption of what the ideal parent must do to help with school improvement and when parents do not fit the idealized form, they do not measure up and are often blamed for identified shortcomings in student achievement. The good or ideal parent has been constructed through a historical educational discourse as one who follows the lead of the school, who is involved, but not too involved, and one who supports the school's agenda, but does not challenge it (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Nagakawa, 2000; Pushor, 2007, 2013).

The Discourse about parents in relation to schools reflects the current trends and influences of what the aims of education and schooling are all about. In much of the contemporary literature on school improvement, student learning and achievement is presented as the main purpose and aim of schools, therefore, families and parents are positioned as

attending and serving the school's mission, values and practices. Suissa (2006, 2009) reminds us of the kind of Discourse teachers are socialized into imposes an expectation on parents privileging a more pedagogical relationship in service of meeting the school's agenda. Within this Discourse hides an underlying assumption that when families lack knowledge about how to support their children's learning at school, it is incumbent upon educators to also fill this knowledge gap. This overarching Discourse deeply influences decisions that both parents and teachers make about parent involvement and the possibilities that can be imagined for how families and schools should interact. The language used to discuss parents in relation to schools influences how the rules of engagement are written and creates representations of how to be an ideal parent within the interface between home and school.

Ramaekers and Suissa (2011) further the argument and describe the language used with reference to parents in much of the policy and popular literature of the last few years as becoming far more oriented towards outcomes, emphasizing achievement, impact and results, originating in the context of formal education. They further state: "For children of primary school age, parental involvement—particularly in the form of what is interpreted as ‘good parenting’ in the home—has the biggest impact on their achievement and adjustment" (Ramaekers & Suissa, 2011, p. 201). Cremin and Drury (2015) note that many policies intended to improve parent involvement with schools actually serve to alienate some parents while privileging others. "Some attempts to increase parental involvement amount to little more than a form of cultural imperialism, devaluing the practices and value of families who may already be marginalized" (Cremin & Drury, 2015, p. 19).

While the importance of family is emphasized in the literature about school improvement, parents and families can also be portrayed as potentially problematic, particularly

those that do not fit the mold of the ideal parent. This typically leads to deficit-model explanations for achievement difficulties of ethnic minority and lower income students placing their families and backgrounds as central to the cause (Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Nakagawa, 2000; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). The parent involvement/school improvement paradigm has created a Discourse that projects a conception of an ideal parent which is used as a comparison for an actual parent. From the school's perspective, this comparison inadvertently marginalizes many parents, which ultimately serves to silence and suppress their involvement (Nakagawa, 2000).

Pushor (2007) describes this as the taken-for-granted operating structure of schools where educators believe that education is about taking children outside the context of their home and community for real learning to occur. Within this parent involvement paradigm exists a privileging of educator as expert possessing a body of professional knowledge that positions them and the school in a hierarchical place, of which home and parents are secondary. This sentiment is echoed by Cairney-Munsie (1992):

Because the school is still setting the agenda and determining what roles parents are to play within that agenda, the hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interests of the less-knowing parents, is maintained. With parent involvement, the focus is placed on what parents can do to help the school realize its intentioned outcomes for children, not on what the parents' hopes, dreams or intentions for their children may be or on what the school can do to help parents realize their personal or family agendas. The viewpoint seems to be one of seeking to determine what parents can do for teachers, rather than what schools can do for families. (p. 5)

Despite the gap in our understanding of parent involvement, only a handful of researchers have looked at how parents can be engaged in schools to define their own involvement and ironically they have also been left out of the conversation about what their involvement should mean (Cremin & Drury, 2015; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Snell, 2011). Since parents typically do not define involvement from their perspective, schools and researchers have identified the barriers to involvement on their behalf—lack of time, lack of interest, childcare issues, transportation and language. When parents are allowed to voice their own perspective, they contend that stereotypical views of families, time limitations by educators, unwelcoming school environments, and unrealistic expectations placed on them by the school are the more likely barriers that suppress their involvement (Snell, 2011).

Payne (2006) posits the concepts schools have used (through the school-improvement paradigm) to reach out and involve parents tend to be one way, linear, ritualistic, meeting-oriented, and school-centric. Edwards et al., (1999) go as far as saying that often schools and teachers enter into a discourse that either attempts to "parent the parents" (p. xx), or a discourse that "rushes to judgment [holding] false assumptions about families and children" (p. 11). Like diverse students, parents are a heterogeneous group with varying degrees of social and cultural capital, funds of knowledge and ways of negotiating the world (Edwards et al., 1999; Lareau, 2000; Whalley, 2012).

It could be argued that within the school improvement perspective lives a perpetuation of thinking and acting that until questioned and disrupted will continue to influence beliefs, values, opinions, policies and practices that determine the boundaries that create the space where home and school meet. The general prevailing accepted and articulated view held by educators is that parents (particularly minority and lower income) are failing their children and until schools have

full involvement (as defined by schools) of parents, schools will continue to adopt deficit-model explanations in discussing achievement difficulties of those who are marginalized (Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Gorski, 2011; Nakagawa, 2000; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Arguably this cyclical, unproductive and self-perpetuating system continues to propagate the status quo.

### **2.3.2 Counterpoint: A family-centered paradigm.**

Lawrence-Lightfoot in her seminal 1978 book, *Worlds Apart*, describes home and school as overlapping worlds with fuzzy boundaries. She describes the anxiety between parents and teachers as growing out of boundary ambiguity. She adds: "Parents and teachers argue (often silently and resentfully) about who should be in control of the child's life in school" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978, p. 26). Lawrence-Lightfoot describes this dissonance as a result of historically-embedded cultural assumptions that children will be the passive recipients of school's normative structure despite their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) invites a different lens through which to view the space where home and school meet. Her perspective invites a view through a more sympathetic humanistic and socio-cultural lens that reminds us of how negotiations between the boundaries of home and school are psychological, metaphoric, intangible, and tangled in emotional content. Beneath the surface of the school improvement and student achievement paradigm lives complicated subjectivities of human and social ways of being. Parent and teacher temperaments towards and perspectives of school policies and practices define that space where home and school overlap. Each overlap contains an assemblage of socially defined positions and contextual conditions. The degree to which schools present as insular institutions with pre-determined ways of positioning their communities and families is reflected in the lived experiences of those who

inhabit the in-between spaces. It is in these in-between-nesses where questions and stories can be found that invite further exploration, deconstruction and re-authoring of Discourse, habitus and the grammar of schooling (Bourdieu, 1986; Gee, 2004, 2015; Tyack & Tobin, 1993).

The role of a caring presence in schools (Noddings, 2005) focuses on how the educator-student relationship should be more likened to a parent-child bond. Wilde (2013) and Thayer-Bacon (2003) both suggest that the kind of care found within the parent-child relationship that embodies attentive understanding, nurturing and compassion in institutions like schools, is often deemphasized in favor of a more technical, measurable and objective relationship between teacher, student, and family. Notions of care and relational epistemology as defined by Noddings (2005), Wilde (2013), Thayer-Bacon (2003) are rarely discussed in educational policy discourse in general, and even less in the discourses around the home-school interface.

Countering school-centered approaches to parent involvement and engagement requires the building of trust and relationships with parents and community members. Pushor (2007, 2017) surfaces relationship building as a theme that is repeated over and over again in studies of parent engagement. Educators tend to presuppose that because of their privileged position in history and society, families trust them, when in fact, trust is an earned privilege (Constantino, 2005). Trust is no longer a given within the home-school interface. Trust is built through consistent, intentional and personalized efforts to build quality relationships through time and contact. Trust is also a two-way construct. Parents and families also enter into the space where home and school meet with a similar task of earning or forfeiting the trust of educators. Trust is key to partnership. Partnership assumes equality (Lareau, 2000). Equality in true partnership between educators and families challenges the hegemonic grammar of schooling from which the story of home and school has and generally continues to be written.

Mackay (2003) and Nakagawa (2000) both suggest that by attending to the underlying assumptions within membership of a Discourse, there exists the possibility to free its members from the unconsciousness of its taken-for-granted assumptions. Gee (1996) adds: "Liberating literacies and Discourses are those that give us the meta-language for the critique of other literacies and Discourses and the way they constitute us as persons and situate us in society" (p. 9). Therein lies the potential to open and challenge dominant Discourses that for too long have gone unquestioned and uninterrupted, especially those that dwell in contradiction that both invite and prevent, exonerate and blame, celebrate and criticize.

A paradigmatic counterpoint could potentially shift away from the taken-for-grantedness inherent in the school improvement Discourse turning attention towards the ontology of a more family-centered paradigm. The family-centered paradigm offers a relational strength-based discourse that seeks partnership through transactional engagement and appreciation of diversity (Epley, Summers, & Turnbull, 2010; Keyser, 2006). Family-centered theory makes space for multiple identities, contexts and backgrounds of children and families that come to school. It offers a discourse that does not contradict itself, but rather builds on strengths, values diversity and fosters Thayer-Bacon's (2003) notion of relational (e)pistemology and Noddings' (2005, 2013) notion of relational caring that places emphasis on human relations that exist in and through shared practices and shared worlds. Membership in a Discourse built through a relational epistemological and ontological lens could invite development of socially constructed understandings created among people in relation to each other and their context. The discourse within a relational family-centered Discourse would view parents and teachers as fellow social-beings-in-relation-with-others, and would foster relationships from a place of caring, rather than from hegemonic sources of power that oppress or silence (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). A relational



approach to knowing agrees with what Dewey called transactional relationships where we are selves-in-relation to others, historically and locally situated beings (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). A relationally inspired Discourse around the home-school interface could invite educators to take into consideration the wider social context within which they and their students, families and schools exist. Thayer-Bacon (2003) suggests that within a larger social and historical context, there exists opportunity for better understandings of our own situatedness as well as learning to better understand others. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) further argue that:

If we are to teach, we must first examine our own assumptions about families and children and we must be alert to the negative images in the literature...instead of responding to "pathologies" we must recognize that what we see may actually be healthy adaptations to an uncertain and stressful world. As teachers...we need to think about the children themselves and try to imagine the contextual worlds of their day to day lives. (p. 203)

In an effort to forge new ties between families and schools, Nakagawa (2000) suggests that representations of families and relationships with families require expansion and attention to relations. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978), over 40 years ago, recognized how home-school relationships often serve to perpetuate inequalities in society. She writes: "In an effort to initiate and sustain productive interactions with parents, educators must begin by searching for strength (not pathology) in children and their families" (p. 42). Therefore, the home-school interface can be a space either be defined by power boundaries of exclusivity and marginalization, or a relational space where educators share an empathetic relation with families and their children, "gaining access to their hopes as well as their habits of nurture" (Grumet, 1988, p. 179).

### **2.3.3 Family-centeredness within ecological systems theory.**

Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1992) ecological systems theory offers five levels of interactions that directly and indirectly influence child development; including the: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem includes the people and settings where children learn and are nurtured. These include parents and teachers; home and school. The mesosystem represents the interface of relationships and interactions between and among individuals and settings that make up the microsystem. These relationships and interactions are significant because they represent the degree of continuity, coordination and connection within a child's immediate developmental context. The other systems beyond the micro and meso represent indirect, yet external influences on child development including parent employment conditions, government policy and ideology that lead to social policies (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014).

From ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992), human flourishing depends on all the different systems interacting in constructive reciprocally beneficial ways. Children's emotional safety and sense of well-being are deeply affected by the adult relationships that surround them (Keyser, 2006; Weiss et al., 2014). A family-centered paradigm based in ecological and relational "(e)pistemology" paradigms (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2003) challenges an almost universal dominant discourse of parent involvement that treats difference from the norm as a deficit. Families placed at the center of essential partnerships with schools acknowledges both teachers and parents as having knowledge, expertise, experience and resources needed for both educating and caring for each child (Epley, et al., 2010; Keyser, 2006).

The family-centered paradigm nested within Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1992) ecological systems theory, pays close attention to the interconnectedness of the various players within a child's microsystem that permeate the mesosystem. The family-centered paradigm places support for families as the central goal to ultimately nurture the well-being of children, since the family is the key decision-maker in all aspects of a child's life. The characteristics and consequences of family-centered practice is not well known or easily found within elementary education literature and is much more prevalent in the areas of inclusive/special education, childcare and medical practice (McWilliam, Maxwell & Sloper, 1999). As a result there exists a research to practice and policy gap in the subsequent years after children begin public school and a research opportunity to examine more closely the potentiality of using the principles of family-centered practice in the elementary years (Dunst, 2002).

McWilliam et al., (1999) and Keyser (2006) describe the underlying values and principles of a family-centered paradigm:

- Children and families are an ecological unit [microsystem]; an effect on one effects all others;
- All knowledge and expertise is valued and acknowledged;
- Open communication leads to two way conversations;
- Families are equal partners in relationship with service providers [mesosystem] and have choice in what involvement they will have;
- Family diversity and dignity is acknowledged and respected in that family-determined needs and wishes are addressed first;
- Families are resourceful, but all families do not have equal access to resources; and,

- Professionals accept that parents and families will determine their differing roles within their partnerships.

The family-centered paradigm within the ecological systems framework assumes all people have strengths, is non-judgmental, assets-based and possesses empathetic views of families and community, is responsive to individual family concerns, believes all families have hopes and dreams for their children and values positive relationships as central to practice (Dunst, 2002; Epley, et al., 2010; McWilliam et al., 1999; Weiss et al., 2014). The diverse needs and dispositions toward the schooling process that children bring to the classroom are acknowledged and create the foundations from which classroom curriculum is developed (Kincheloe, 2008).

Family-centeredness assumes schooling adds one more element to the broader context of a child's overall education and the role of the parent is to provide a more holistic, intimate, subjective and passionate view on the development of the child. The family-centered paradigm offers a relational and positive discourse that seeks partnership through transactional engagement and appreciation of diversity (Keyser, 2006).

Thayer-Bacon's (2003) notion of relational epistemology and Noddings (2005, 2013) concept of relational care live within the assumptions of the family-centered paradigm. Thayer-Bacon (2003) describes knowers as social beings-in-relation-with-others, not in isolation of each other: "All of us are historical, locally situated beings" (p. 251). She further states that educators cannot focus just on individual students as isolated beings, but must rather take into consideration the ecological context in students and teachers are embedded. Noddings (2005, 2013) posits that relational care requires a mutuality and reciprocity, and if the recipients of our care do not feel cared for, then a caring relation does not exist. So often in the home-school

interface educators and parents espouse to care *about* constructing positive relationships, yet if both are not in a reciprocal and mutual caring relation *for* the other, then such caring relations are not present. Noddings (2013) suggests that through relational perspectives, we are encouraged to "study the conditions that make it possible for positive caring relations to flourish and to act on transforming the conditions that make caring difficult or impossible" (p. xxii).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) reminds us that families possess generational inheritances and historical legacies that accompany children from their home lifeworld into their school world. The family-centered paradigm invites a focus on human relations as integral to education by acknowledging the wider web of relations beyond the limits of the educational relation traditionally "barricaded off when children begin schooling" (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2010, p. 7). Through a wide-angle lens, parents are seen as their children's first educators and are respected for their experience and perspective; relationships are more collaborative and authentic, and an effort towards symmetry and alliance is adopted through caring relation (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Noddings, 2005, 2013; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). The family-centered paradigm attends to the interconnectedness of all the subsystems influencing a child's development (Weiss et al., 2014).

At the mesosystem level, the perspectives on positive relationships, two-way communication, shared goals and resources between the school and families determines the potential and potency of the system. What teachers believe about parents and families will affect the success of the partnership. When teachers assume that parents are good, strong, skillful, resourceful and equal, it is easier to provide support and encouragement in ways that allows families to maintain their dignity and hope (Keyser, 2006). What parents and families believe about schools and teachers will also affect the success of the partnership. When parents and families find trust and safety in healthy mesosystem relationships with schools and teachers, they

may provide the kinds of support and encouragement that allows teachers to exercise their professional knowledge and practices with respect and support.

### **2.3.4 Influential worldviews: Deficit or resilience, at risk or at promise.**

The cultural deficit model verses the resiliency strength based model are binary constructs each reflecting a discourse and worldview around how to discuss families and children who do not fit within white middle class normative expectations (Comber, 2014; Davis, 1996; Giroux, 1987; Gorski, 2011; Grumet, 1988; Y. Kim, 2009; S. Lopez & Louis, 2009; Sebolt, 2018; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). When educators assume a deficit perspective, children and families are viewed based upon perceptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Such a perspective deteriorates expectations for students and weakens educators' abilities to recognize cultural wealth and funds of knowledge. Gorski (2011) states: "The most devastating brand of this sort of deficit thinking emerges when we mistake difference particularly difference from ourselves- for deficit" (p. 152). If families and children are referenced as being at risk, they are discussed and viewed through the cultural deficit model or perspective (Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Davis, 1996; Gorski, 2011, Grumet, 1988; Y. Kim, 2009; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001). Whereas, families and children referenced as being at promise, are discussed and viewed through an assets and strength-based resiliency model (Davis, 1996).

The deficit perspective is a way of looking at children and families characterized by "narrowness, presumption, and judgment" (Dantas & Manyak, 2010, p. 8). Gorski (2011) explains: "Like most repressive dispositions, the deficit perspective is a symptom of larger sociopolitical conditions and ideologies born out of complex socialization processes" (p. 153). Historically and institutionally teachers are socialized into being expert holders of official knowledge, language and values that define what education is and what it means to be educated.

Education is what happens in schools through a prescribed curriculum. Students are seen to be successfully educated when they have proved their academic success according to measureable standards and outcomes. Students are collated, sorted and ranked according to how well they measure up. This perspective, based in positivism, believes in a "standardized decontextualized education that assumes everyone is the same regardless of race, class, or gender" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 28). It is when children arrive at school not fitting within the normative criteria of what is expected that marginalization and culturally deficit views are perpetuated (Gorski, 2011; Y. Kim, 2009; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

The strength-based resiliency view recognizes multiple ways of knowing beyond the school curriculum that builds on people's strengths, values diversity of language, Discourse membership, cultural capital and identity (S. Lopez & Louis, 2009). The school experience is but one aspect of what it means to be educated. Children's familial cultural capital and funds of knowledge are taken seriously as resources to inform curriculum design. This perspective, rooted in both social constructivism and constructionism, and based in both family-centered and critical theory literature, views knowledge production and education as socially constructed relational acts recognizing all people as holders of cultural and social resources and creators of knowledge.

Accountability measures as positioned within the school improvement paradigm and echoed in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) produce a risk factor discourse that influences teacher thinking and ultimately teacher practices. The at-risk construct reinforces thinking around children and families of poverty as victims of their own making rather than questioning the larger systemic issues of inequalities in school funding and resources, as well as oppressive policies and practices at the macro-levels of society (Gorski, 2011). It is an institutionalized worldview, "an ideology woven into socializing institutions, including school

[which] shapes individual assumptions and dispositions in order to encourage compliance with an oppressive educational and social order" (Gorski, 2011, p. 154). Both the deficit thinking framework and the risk factor model positions poor school performance within students' alleged cognitive and motivational deficits, while dismissing inequitable and oppressive institutional structures that create barriers rather than opening pathways for minority or disadvantaged children (Comber, 2014; Comber & Kamler, 2004; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Gorski, 2011; Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Sebolt, 2018; Valencia, 1997; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

Kim (2009) conducted an extensive literature review into school barriers that prevent minority parents' participation in their children's schooling in the United States. She found that the literature presents teacher and administrator perceptions of parent involvement with schools as much lower for ethnically diverse, poor, and single parent families. Her review concludes that existing hierarchical views on parent involvement present a dangerous perspective when the nature of minority parent involvement in their children's education is considered. There is a case of double jeopardy when the underachievement of minority children is viewed as resulting from a lack of parent participation which is translated by teachers into a lack of interest by their parents in their children's schooling. Kim (2009), Payne (2013), Gorski (2011), and Davis (1996) all agree that placing blame on marginalized people deficiencies of minority parents and attributes this trend as responsible for blaming parents rather than schools as causing both lack of parent involvement (defined as supporting the school's agenda of involvement) and ultimately minority student success. Teachers and schools, often unknowingly view minority and marginalized students through a deficit lens which ultimately leads to expectation and acceptance of students and families as lacking promise (Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Grumet, 1988; Hogg,



2011; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). A deficit teacher's mindset places blame on the students and families' life conditions as being responsible for lack of success in schools. Gorski (2011) and Yosso (2005) both contend that such stereotypes are often propagated within schools, not by educators who purposefully act unjustly, but by those socialized by a deficit hegemony who continue to perpetuate it without realizing or questioning their thoughts and actions.

### **2.3.5 Children and families: With promise through funds of knowledge.**

The counter perspective to Payne's (2013) influential culture of poverty model and the risk factor view is found within socio-cultural worldviews that embrace the competence of all people by taking up an assets and strength-based perspective predicated on human potential. The children and families at risk construct is replaced by the at promise construct which relies upon the resilience paradigm found within prevention literature (Davis, 1996; Gorski, 2011).

Resilience or resiliency is the construct used to describe the quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to school failure, substance abuse, mental health problems, and juvenile delinquency predicted for them" (Davis, 1996, p. 7).

The resilience model builds on protective and adaptive factors from an assets or strength orientation (Davis, 1996). The at promise orientation challenges educators to "reexamine the ways diverse students and families are positioned by moving toward greater openness, sensitivity, and appreciation of difference" (Dantas & Manyak, 2010, p. 8).

Hogg (2011) cites numerous anthropological studies since the 1960s including the funds of knowledge work (Gonzalez, et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992) around children and families of diversity, poverty and disadvantage. These studies have shown that diversity in families and children are characterized as deficits due mostly to perception and stereotypes embedded in the

Discourses of social institutions like school. Many "disadvantaged" students from ethnic minority and/or lower socio-economic status, are "actually more correctly disadvantaged by a fundamental lack of alignment between their own funds of knowledge and those of their teachers" (Hogg, 2011, p. 667).

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines' (1988) extensive ethnographies of poor black urban New York families, Auerbach's (1989) critique of transmission oriented family literacy programs, and Heath's (1983) longitudinal ethnographic study in two southern US neighboring working class communities are further examples of research that aligns with the strengths-based perspective. Funds of knowledge research reframes children's language, culture, and intellectual capacities as resources or cultural capital rather than deficiencies that need fixing (Gonzalez, et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). It represents an additive or asset-based approach to education whereby the culture, language and homes of children are recast in terms of their resilience, strengths and resources from which learning and education can be enhanced (Kinney, 2015; S. Lopez & Louis, 2009). Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) ethnographic study discovered rich examples of literacies used for a variety of purposes, audiences and situations within impoverished urban homes dispelling the myths of children of poverty coming to school from illiterate environments. Auerbach (1997b) and Cairney & Ruge (1997) both cite several problematic assumptions upon which family literacy programs are developed including the belief that language-minority children come from language and literacy impoverished homes. They further suggest that deficit perspectives of families prevent understanding the cultural differences that may promote different views of literacy and literacy practices. Heath's (1983) ethnographic research highlighted language expertise and literacy proficiency in the lives of families often

viewed as lacking. She suggests that varied interactional styles and uses of language and literacies across communities are differences, not deficits.

What might happen if we engaged in a Discourse that focuses less on categorizing children's home lifeworlds as an interference with their life chances and more on disrupting how schools over time have come to presume, label and "tag" (Graue & Hawkins, 2010) children and families that look and act different than their pre-conceived normative ideal? Knowledge is not neutral and exists within an interpretive framework that teachers and schools use to make sense of their demographics which leads to tagging children based on inferred categories. Schools according to Gorski (2011), are micro-contexts into which individuals and groups are socialized to behave accordingly. Educators do not purposefully act in oppressive ways, but rather respond to a historically institutionalized hegemonic Discourse of broader social conditioning that includes propagation of myths, stereotypes and practices (Giroux, 1996; Gorski, 2011; Peters & Lankshear, 1996).

### **2.3.6 Clearing the path of semantics that shape and define the home-school interface.**

Within the vast research in family involvement and parent engagement exists a lack of clarity regarding how the interface between home and school is defined. Often the terms involvement and engagement are used interchangeably (Ferlazzo, 2011; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009; Grolnick & Raftery-Helmer, 2015; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Pushor, 2007, 2010).

Theoretical models of parent engagement offer a broad range of engagement definitions, many of which focus narrowly on parents' involvement inside schools, rather than other ways they engage in their children's learning (Fox & Olson, 2014). The lack of consistency in the literature and research field has led to many questions regarding how definitions have been operationalized,

how they have influenced research and what specific measures have been used to both qualify and quantify the aspects of what should be researched and why it matters (Fox & Olson, 2014).

Kim and Sheridan (2015) offer two broad research categories that help to better conceptualize and clarify what definitions and terms the field is actually referencing. Structural approaches and relational approaches to home-school connections (Kim & Sheridan, 2015) will be used as broad theoretical frameworks in which this study has been positioned. Structural approaches articulate the forms and structures of activities that are created to engage parents to help improve their children's achievement at school. Schools, under pressure to involve parents as a strategy to improve academic performance, create programs and roles for their families (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). These are typically school-determined and compartmentalized between settings. Examples of structural approaches to school-based involvement activities include parent-teacher conferences and communications, volunteering and fund-raising. Structural approaches to home-based involvement activities include homework completion, reading to children and supporting the school's requests by demonstrating positive attitudes and aspirations for children's learning (Kim & Sheridan, 2015).

Through the lens of the school improvement paradigm, families are seen as a homogenous group of supporters who are obligated to adopt a specific role in assisting schools to meet their achievement and accountability agendas (Cremin et al., 2015; Kincheloe, 2008; Pushor, 2007). There is an underlying assumption of what the ideal family must do to help with school improvement such as attend to and cooperate with structures and activities planned for them by the school. When families do not fit the conception of what is ideal, they do not measure up and are viewed as deficient and in need of remediation (Goodman, 2001; Gorski, 2011; Nagakawa, 2000; Suissa, 2009). Structural approaches to home-school connections have

traditionally dominated the research literature because they are easy to measure and report (Epstein et al., 2009, 2011; Felier, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007). They typically take up a deficit discourse or "the language of deprivation" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 8), particularly in reference to homes and families that possess different social and cultural capital than what the school privileges most (Constantino, 2005; Delpit, 2006; Edwards et al., 1999; Goodman, 2001; Gorski, 2011; Graue & Hawkins, 2010; Lareau, 2000; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Sebolt, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Structural approaches align more closely with Ferlazzo's (2011) definition of family involvement that positions families as recipients of direction by the school on how they are to support teachers in their children's learning.

Relational approaches, according to Kim and Sheridan (2015), focus on interpersonal relationships that acknowledge the significance of shared roles and responsibilities among families and schools which rely on mutual cooperation, coordination and collaboration to enhance the educational experience for children across social, emotional, behavioral and academic domains. The concept of partnership is also based on mutual and reciprocal equality between the partners, as elaborated upon by Ledwith and Springett (2014): "Partnerships cannot be mutual unless all parties believe they have as much to learn from each other as they have to give" (p. 203). Constructive relationships among home-school partners provide opportunities for dialogue and problem solving. Relational approaches are much more aligned with Ferlazzo's (2011) definition of parent engagement that positions parents as partners with equal voice in their children's school learning experiences. Relational approaches to home-school connections within ethnographic methodologies typically take up an assets-based approach to documenting contextually-based experiences, and include: funds of knowledge (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), family literacy (Taylor, 1997), and local literacies (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012).

Based on their dual approach analysis of the literature on parent involvement and engagement, Kim and Sheridan (2015) posit a theoretical model, called home-school connections, that integrates both the structural and relational approaches within a partnership orientation that is strength-based, culturally sensitive, developmentally responsive and flexible according to the social circumstances and needs of families and their children (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). They argue that structural approaches without attention to relationality serve to perpetuate how home and school traditionally are positioned in a hierarchical manner. Therefore, Kim and Sheridan (2015) suggest a dual approach that builds from structure first as a way to build and nurture relationships.

## **2.4 Third Space Theory**

Postmodern social theory took a spatial turn in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in almost every discipline replacing traditional historical and social perspectives (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Soja, 2014). Henri Lefebvre, known as the leading spatial theorist and philosopher of the twentieth century, asserted that "all social relations remain abstractions until they are concretized in space" (Soja, 2014, p. xiv). The spatial turn has created an opportunity for thinking about space as more than an attribute or simple outcome of social processes. Soja (2014) invites the potentiality of theorizing space as a causal force with relatively unexplored explanatory power in current epistemological thinking (p. xiv).

Through spatial theory, spaces are seen as socially produced through discursive and social interactions and an integral part of all social relationships (Bhabha, 1994; Gutierrez, 2008; Soja, 1996, 2014). Marginalization is often accomplished spatially in schools and classrooms whether it be physically or through belief systems that value certain discourses over others. According to Soja (1996), socially produced spaces can either be helpful or hurtful. Social space

can be filled with injustices, inequalities, exploitations and domination and since it is socially constructed, it can also be socially changed, deconstructed, reinvented and reorganized through social action to be more just, equal, inclusive, generative and nurturing (Soja, 1996). Seen through this dynamic spatial perspective, all the socially constructed spaces and places in which we live, including home and school, shape our lives in rich ways that enable and enhance or impoverish through constraints and oppression (Soja, 2014).

Third space theory offers a compelling framework for studying the complexity of spaces populated by groups of unequal power. Schools, as power-filled spaces, unconsciously shape and define for children and parents how to belong or not belong in a space, often not questioning the values and assumptions that define their Discourse that shapes its space. "Very little research exists in third space theory within a family literacy program" (Anderson et al., 2010, as cited in Pichardo, 2012, p. 23). This would suggest research potential exists in looking at the interface of home-school literacies from a spatial perspective.

Space, according to Soja (1996), can be conceived as a formidable force that shapes human action, social change, power boundaries and people's identities. Hegemonic power can both universalize and marginalize difference in third spaces (Soja, 1996). hooks (1990) describes space as powerful in shaping the way we are and by being shaped by space we learn how to belong in that space. She describes understanding space as a location from which to see and to be seen, to give voice and to struggle over making both theoretical and practical sense of the world. hooks (1990) further elaborates: "We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world" (p. 153). Third space rejects the notion of divisive binary oppositions in favor of both-and-also or the concept of hybridity which opens up

conditions for a restructuring of thinking and ideas. Gutierrez (2008) refers to such sites of collaboration and innovation as collective third spaces where "both joint and individual sense making occurs" (S. D. Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011, p. 300).

Discourses are located in socially produced spaces. Third space theory attempts to explain and resolve the tensions and lack of productivity that may arise when different cultural and institutional identities come into contact including those with similar goals (Cook, 2005; Pane, 2007). Moje et al. (2004) describe the possibilities within a third space as having opposite and competing Discourses working together to bring about new learning, new Discourses, and new forms of literacy. Gutierrez (2013), notes that the spatial turn in studies of literacy learning emphasizes how attending to space and place is critical when trying to understand the "situated nature of people's meaning-making related practices" (p. xxx). The coming together of multiple Discourses in third spaces focus on social constructions or hybridity, rather than assimilation of one into the other (Gutierrez, 2013, p. xxxii). Through this perspective, third spaces are generative sites where people can organize, collect energy and negotiate hybrid knowledge, identity and literacies (Gutierrez, 2013).

Pushor's (2007) colonialist metaphor describes a space where school policies, procedures, programs, schedules and routines have historically positioned families on the margins seeking to determine what they can do for teachers, rather than what schools can do for and with them (Cairney & Munsie, 1992). Soja (1996) suggests that despite how bounded socially produced spaces become over time, they can be opened up and reorganized to foster new and different interactions and relationships. To move toward more fully authorizing the perspectives of families within the home-school interface is not simply about inviting them into existing conversations within existing power structures, it is about ensuring that there are legitimate and



valued spaces within which they can speak (Cook-Sather, 2002). A. C. Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George (2004) suggest that through an ecological understanding of parent engagement comes a strength-based perspective that positions parents as authorities of their children and their learning. Their authority as parents of their children suggests a generative ability as contributing authors in spaces (mesosystem) where members of a child's microsystem interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992).

#### **2.4.1 Spatial theory and literacies.**

Spatiality in terms of literacies helps attend to space and place when understanding the situated nature of how people make and find meaning. The discourses of third space position dominant and non-dominant ways of viewing the world together and make possible the creation of new possibilities, social construction and trans or cross-culturalism, not assimilation of either one or the other (Aoki, 1991/2005b; Gutierrez, 2013). Rather than seeing homes and schools as defined as separate bounded literacy spaces, spatial theory provides an opportunity to look at literacies as circulating across spaces linking and entangling together as resources for establishing new meanings in and between the worlds that students navigate. Multiple forms of literacy coexist and vary within and across the spaces of home and school and the privileged literacies of school frequently enter into home spaces with the assumption that families take them up and live them with their children. What is less common is the reverse and home literacies often remain invisible to teachers despite their relevance to children. The different and many literacies depending on cultural context, social purpose, life experience, personal interest and knowledge bases across spaces and places lead to the notion of hybridity as a place and space maker.

## **2.5 Literacy as a Socio-constructivist and Sociocultural Construct**

### **2.5.1 Learning, language and literacies.**

Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analyzed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012, p. 3).

Rowse (2006) establishes that: "Literacy is everywhere and shaped by the spaces we enter and exit" (p. 11). Street (1984, 1993) describes two contrasting models of literacy; the autonomous and the ideological models. In the autonomous model of literacy, assumptions are made by educators that literacy alone provides certain cognitive benefits, its development is unidirectional, it is inseparable from schooling, and brings about social, economic and political progress. The autonomous model is teacher-centered and literacy is an object of study in that it is explicitly talked about and taught. School reading and writing is usually evaluated and measured for correctness and accuracy (D. Barton, 1997).

According to Street (1984, 1993), the ideological model of literacy assumes that the meaning of literacy cannot be separated from the social institutions and situations in which it is practiced or from the social practices in which it is acquired by people. The ideological model aligns more so with the aforementioned D. Barton and Hamilton (2012) definition of literacy. It is a learner-centered approach that views literacy as embedded in socially and culturally influenced contexts. The social transactional view of literacy development (Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki, 2005) also agrees with Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1992) ecological systems theory and the concept of bidirectionality, which states that the child impacts the environment,

and is in turn impacted by the environment. Children do not wait until they enter school to engage in literacies. They interact and transact with multiple semiotic practices from birth within their homes or other contexts that are specific to an environment, are purposeful, holistic and incidental to the main purpose of their everyday practices and ways of being in the world.

Drawing from social constructivist and social constructionist, sociocultural and critical theory perspectives, learning occurs through social interaction and is mediated through language in different social culturally and historically influenced contexts (Kincheloe, 2008; Vygotsky 1978). Language is the essence of culture and serves to construct experience and organize social practices (Giroux, 1987). Literacy and language are also viewed as capital in sociocultural studies; those in power determine what is most valued and those who possess the most ultimately hold advantage (Hull & Moje, 2012; Moje, 2013). Therefore, what counts as "school literacy" at any particular time is not a given, but the result of current socio-political influences that may differ or be in conflict with localized and situated home and community literacies (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Cairney, 1995; Cremin et al., 2015; Hannon, 1995; Moje, 2013; Rowsell, 2006; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Gee (2008) defines literacy as mastery of and across multiple Discourses, also referred to as multiple literacies. Within these perspectives, literacy is not just a unitary skill. Literacy encompasses social practices which connect people with one another and are shaped by social roles prescribing who may produce and have access to them. Literacy events are the actual activities in which literacy practices have a role. The situated nature of literacy means it always occurs in a social context, typically within regular, repeated life activities (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Cairney, 1995; Hannon, 1995). The situatedness of literacy, therefore, means that within a given space or place, there are different or multiple literacies associated with

different domains of life. Therefore, learning, language and literacy are complementary and inseparable pieces of how humans shape their understandings and ways of being in the world (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1987; Moll, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

The home is often identified as the primary environment or, in essence, a third teacher (Malaguzzi, 1998) that shapes a child's membership in a Discourse and is central to the beginnings of children's meaning making (learning) and social identity (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Gee, 2008; Schulz, 2010). Literacy is nurtured within a child's home as a beginning and foundation for a child's learning through relationship-based, shared meanings which are both developed and mediated through language and literacy. Literacy is deeply embedded in the social processes of family life and within the home environment. The way children are socialized in language and literacy determines their preparation to either thrive or struggle in school curriculum that often operates under the autonomous model of literacy where success is measured by outcomes and standards (D. Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Street, 1984, 1993).

Based on the social theory of literacy and learning, some literacy practices and Discourses (within the educational system) are afforded more visibility, authority and capital than others (within homes and communities) (Cremin et al., 2015; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 2008; Schulz, 2010; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001). When children arrive at school with language and understanding of literacies that do match those valued by the school, the interface between home and school, dominated by the "authority of the school voice," (Giroux, 1987, p. 14) positions them as culturally deficient, often labels them as disabled and at risk for learning according to measureable standards.

As children transition into spaces beyond home, their literacy socialization may or may not align with their receiving teacher and school's expectations. "Schools inconsistently tap the social and cultural resources of society, privileging specific groups by emphasizing particular linguistic styles, curriculum and authority patterns" (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Cairney and Munsie 1999, p. 4). Hannon (1995) describes school literacy as a privileged social construction that differs from the literacies of family, community and workplace worlds. Therefore, what literacies children and families bring with them into the home-school interface can determine not only what assumptions are made about their learning potential, it can also presuppose expectations for home-school relationships around literacy learning. Cairney (1995) suggests that since literacy (as defined socio-culturally) is central to the learning process of all children, it is a logical focus around which to build positive relational partnerships with parents based on an appreciation that home is both the beginning and foundation of literacy and learning for children.

Home-school connections and literacies through a relationally strength-based perspective builds on people's strengths and values diversity of language, Discourse membership, cultural capital and identity. This perspective also aligns with a sociocultural definition of literacy, as well as Street's (1984) ideological theory of literacy as fundamentally a social interactive act of making meaning of multiple perspectives, located in the interaction between people, between different texts and in relation to context (Bakhtin, 1981; D. Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Cairney, 1995, 2008; Gee, 1996; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

### **2.5.2 Family literacy.**

Taylor (1983) first coined the term family literacy in her ethnographic research that studied literacy by documenting the social nature of reading and writing within the homes of six different families. She concluded that within families and households exists multiple

opportunities for literacy learning based on the interactions and experiences central to their daily practices within their lives. Descriptive research studies have shown that children experience a richness of literacy practices in homes that are not always replicated or familiarized in schools (see D. Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Cairney, 2002, 2008; Cairney & Ruge, 1998; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Around the same time, literacy programs involving families (also called *family literacy*) emerged that aimed to engage parents in understanding and enacting school literacy practices in their homes (Cairney, 2002; Nutbrown et al., 2005; Taylor, 1997). The family literacy program perspective was influenced by a more adult education focused approach as a means to reduce educational inequalities as well as to increase adult literacy. It was seen as a way to both involve parents in their children's schooling as well as assist in parents' own literacy development. Although the original premise behind these programs was to acknowledge and make use of the learners' family relationships and engage with family literacy practices, over time it became more about teaching families how to reinforce school literacy practices in their homes (Cairney, 2002; Nutbrown et al., 2005; Taylor, 1997). The term “family literacy” is now more commonly associated as a wide variety of programs and activities to promote the involvement of both parents and their children in literacy enhancing practices and activities especially to improve the literacy of educationally disadvantaged parents and children (Gadsden, 2008). The perspective defining family literacy as programs for families has most commonly been researched through an outcomes and quantitative framework, while the perspective around the literacies of families continues to be more descriptive and qualitative (Hannon, 1995).

Two broad policy responses have emerged from the research field over the past several decades. One includes attending to the sociolinguistic, cultural and contextual factors that

influence children's literacy focusing on how language and literacy learning occurs within and across diverse settings. The other invests in early school programs that attempt to influence the attitude, beliefs and practices of families without attempts to reciprocally acknowledge and integrate home and family practices into the school curriculum (Gadsen, 2008; Nutbrown et al., 2005).

Over the last three decades, the dichotomous perspectives on parent involvement continue to cause dissonance on how parents and teachers should best interact within the home-school literacy interface. If schools are reaching out to parents through family literacy initiatives from an intervention/prevention perspective, then parents are required to share responsibility of the school literacy learning of their children with schools. When educators make assumptions about families and their literacy practices instead of actually taking the time to examine what the home context has to offer, it leads to a hierarchical school-dominated script typically imposed on families. Viewed through the parent involvement and school achievement paradigm, the school requires parents to conform to its practices based on deficit assumptions that home-based inadequacies can be fixed through remediation strategies while ignoring what assets and resources might exist (Cairney, 2002; Pichardo, 2012; Sebolt, 2018; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001; Yosso, 2005). González et al. (2005) suggest that despite attention to the significance of the situatedness of literacy in homes, there still exists cultural deficit thinking in schools that views students' literacy lives within their homes as deficient in cognitive and social resources. D. Barton (1997) insists that rather than seeing homes as needing to replicate what schools do, family literacy should focus on supporting the things that people already do in their literate lives supporting Auerbach's (1997a, 1997b) multiple literacies and social change perspectives.

## **2.6 Cultural Capital and Curriculum Making**

### **2.6.1 Classrooms as hybrid spaces for inciting generative curriculum.**

As children enter, exit, and bridge between the multiple sites they inhabit, they bring their cultural, historic and linguistic biographies and knowledges with them and use what is most familiar to make meaning (Malaguzzi, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Recognizing, understanding and valuing students' cultural-historical resources or funds of knowledge is an invitation for teachers to view the classroom as a place and space of hybridity where multiple voices echo from home and community. The original funds of knowledge research from González et al. (2005) surfaced three decades ago and is now "a recognized reference to signal a socio-cultural orientation in education that seeks to strategically build on the experiences, resources and knowledge of families and children" (Moll, Soto-Santiago, & Schwartz, 2013, p. 172) - especially those from lower socio-economic demographics. There exists potentiality in creating hybrid places and spaces where both dominant and non-dominant Discourses meet allowing for curriculum to become a generative space where new possibilities, negotiations and transformational pedagogies can occur. Such a space would invite family and community funds of knowledge to breathe life into a curriculum where knowledge and identity re-formation could take root (Gutierrez, 2013). Such a space is described by Pushor (2009):

An important point of attention, as we work to create new stories of parents on school landscapes, is how we honor children's lives as they are lived in the context of the families and communities that surround them. When children come to us in schools they are already living multiple identities as grand/daughters or grand/sons, sisters or brothers, nephews or nieces; as orphaned, detained or wards of the system; as situated in neighborhoods, Reserves, on the streets or in other geographical places; as members of



racial, cultural, religious, economic groups; and as members of other chosen communities. When they come to school, they come in this multiplicity and contextuality, not independent of it. In both direct and indirect ways, they bring their families and communities with them. Our challenge as educators is to learn to share space in classrooms and schools with all those who accompany them. (p. 150)

Diversity within classrooms today invite a hybrid lived curriculum (Aoki, 1979/2005c) that opens pathways for knowledge construction to both empower children to make sense of their everyday lives while learning to deal with ways of seeing and being that are not their own (Dyson, 1993; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Goodman, 2001; Gutierrez, 2013; Kinchelo, 2008). Living a life-filled curriculum as a course of action with others means living in relation with and co-constructing a curriculum informed by the family funds of knowledge, diverse cultural capital, and multi-literacies that accompany a child to school (Au, 1993, 1998; Cairney, 2002; Dyson & Kabuto, 2016; Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005; Pushor, 2013; Schulz, 2010; Sebolt, 2018; Taylor, 1983; Yosso, 2005). A curriculum of openness and belonging to support learners to not only better understand others but more importantly come to better know themselves.

Aoki (1992/2005d) also writes of the relational indwelling of teachers and students as made possible by the presence of care. Family-centeredness means positioning parents and teachers on the "same side of the table joined in support of the child, coordinated in their efforts to problem solve and open in their expression of needing each other" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 243). Pushor (2013) suggests taking up a curriculum of parents described as a living curriculum that reflects the intertwining of many lives and many experiences in the living with and educating of children. Grumet (1988) writes of the need for a curriculum that speaks to a

world that "children know and is accessible to their understanding and action" (p. 171). Living a lifeworld influenced curriculum as a course of action with others means living in relation with and co-constructing a curriculum informed by the child's life and all who are in it (Pinar, 2005; Pushor, 2013). When literacy learning is constructed as the development of languages and literacies children bring with them to school; a hybridization of what is contextual and responsive to who lives within the curricular space.

Hybrid practices give rise to new literacies, new practices and new spaces—third spaces, as Gutierrez (2013) refers to as "collective zones of proximal development...generative sites where people can organize, gather energy, develop new tools and practices and engage in political strategy" (p. xxxiii). Mills and Comber (2013) also suggest there is a consensus that place and space matter to literacy practices and that literacy practices and spatiality are mutually constitutive:

What is needed are pedagogies of place and literacy in schools that create new sets of relationships and possibilities in the microcosm of classrooms, by taking into account relevant aspects of spatiality with a view to repositioning students and teachers as agents who can remake inequitable and oppressive social spaces and places in the struggle for better social futures. (p. 420)

Using spatial theory as a theoretical framework to explore the home-school interface not only helps to frame the potentiality of a curriculum that invites multiple ways of knowing and being in the world, but also suggests a curriculum of movement that intertwines the ideal and the actual (Grumet, 1988). A third space curriculum of agency and generativity could invite pedagogical transactions between home and school to recognize multiple and situated lifeworld contexts and literacies to enable responsive interpretation and participation of those who shape

and form the boundaries of that space. As Botelho et al., (2010) observe, "This is the social and pedagogical responsibility of all teachers and schools" which calls upon a redefinition of "how we do school" (p. 253).

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter reflects my search through the literature that has come together to help me to locate myself as a researcher, refine my quest and point my research path in a direction that aligns with my worldview and paradigmatic assumptions. When trying to understand more deeply why the interface between home and school exists as it does, certain theoretical lenses have led to seeing and thinking in new ways, sharpening my vision and allowing me to see things that I could see or know before (Manyak & Dantas, 2010).

It was important for me to understand how history has shaped the space between home and school and relationships between parents, families and teachers within that space. This led me to a better understanding of how we have been schooled and socialized to believe that there are certain ways of being and belonging which depend on what role one assumes within that space. We have been socialized to practice (say, do and relate) according to a grammar of schooling where membership in a Discourse perpetuates a license to act and be as dictated by a predetermined hegemonic set of rules and values (Cue & Casey, 2017; Gee, 1996, 2015; Gorski, 2011; Kemmis et al., 2014; Tyack & Tobin, 1993). Social order, social and cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986), Lareau (2000), and Yosso (2005) also contribute to who and what are privileged and who and what are marginalized according to institutional definitions of what is important and who best belongs.

Woven within historical shaping of the home-school interface are also paradigmatic positions that influence and shape the lens through which research has been conducted and

approaches to engaging and involving parents and families have been theorized. The school improvement paradigm idealizes and positions parents and families as pedagogic extensions of the aim of education as measured and ranked through standardized and quantifiable means (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Carey & Munsie, 1992; Manyak & Dantas, 2010; Nakagawa, 2000; Suissa, 2006). Parents and families are treated as a homogenous group who should willingly comply with the "hetero-normative expectations" placed on them by the institution (Brien & Stelmach, 2009, p. 4). Through the school improvement perspective, when these expectations are not met, then parents, families and children tend to be framed as deficient and lacking, labeled and marginalized.

A family-centered paradigm within Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1992) ecological systems theory counters the positioning of parents and families as quasi-educators in service to the main agenda of school improvement. Instead, a strength-based and diversity-positive discourse places value on multiple identities, funds of knowledge and sociocultural contexts and backgrounds influenced by relational epistemology and pedagogic care (Keyser, 2006; Noddings, 2005; Thayer-Bacon, 2003; Weiss et al., 2014). The family-centered paradigm positions families as central to nurturing the well-being of children, realizing that the parent view is more holistic, more intimate, more subjective, and more passionate than theirs. "Rather than dismissing their perspective as overinvolved or biased, they see it as an essential complement and counterpoint to their own" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 99).

Kim and Sheridan's (2015) research into parent engagement resulted in a theoretical framework that gives language to represent how homes and schools interface. Structural approaches refer to how schools traditionally create formal engagement opportunities or structures built within the institution for parents and families to interact with teachers. Relational

approaches, in their framework align more with family-centered principles of interacting with home more informally and relationally. They offer a third approach called home-school connections that appeals to schools and teachers to address both to improve how parents and families engage with their children's teachers and overall school education. These approaches help to further elaborate on reconciling and defining the practices or the "sayings, doings, and relatings" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 52) that live within the home-school interface.

Third space theory breathes new life into how practices and approaches within the home-school interface might be reimagined and reshaped. Social relationships create social spaces that can either be positive and productive or unjust and exclusive where identities are formed and reinforced by those with power in the space (hooks, 1990). These socially constructed spaces are malleable and if attended to with compassion, care and relationally can become inclusive, generative and nurturing (Soja, 1996, 2014). Spatiality in terms of literacies aligned with situated nature of how people make and find meaning within their contextual place and culturally defined space or lifeworld. The notion of third space ignited potential in constructing a participatory research space that would invite people with predetermined roles (parent or teacher) to come together along with their funds of knowledge to learn from and with each other while critically exploring what could be learned and gained from such a space.

Family literacy as a construct also reflects differing worldviews within the literature. It can either be viewed as furthering the school improvement agenda by implementing programs that teach parents how to enact school literacy activities in their home or aligning with the family-centered perspective that recognizes literacies of families as diverse sociocultural resources (Auerbach, 1997a; Auerbach, 1997b; Cairney, 2002; Cremin et al., 2015; Hallgarten & Edwards, 2000). The expanded notion of families as possessing literacies as resources to learn

about, from and with further possibilized co-creation of a third space for researching the home-school interface beyond the impact of relationality (Schnellert, Kozak, & Moore, 2015).

The funds of knowledge construct aligns with a sociocultural and socio-constructivist perspective on literacies and literacy learning as not being bound within the confines of autonomous skills to be mastered in school, but as a generative opportunities to bring together diverse Discourses and cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) that lead to transformational pedagogies and permeable curricula (Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Dyson, 1993; Grumet, 1988, Pinar, 2005; Pushor, 2013, Valquez, 2014). Critical literacy learning viewed as the development of languages and literacies that children bring with them in partnership with those literacy skills traditionally privileged in school opens up possibilities of nurturing a third space curriculum welcoming pedagogical transactions between home and school. Transactions that counter oppression and marginalization by nurturing inclusion and belonging. Transactions that invite children to find acceptance of their identities in the day to dayness of navigating between their life and school worlds seamlessly, caringly and hope-fully.

This research study is grounded in a critical sociocultural and social justice perspective that values difference as the foundation for questioning institutional power structures. My view relies more so on the at promise and resiliency paradigms (Davis, 1996; Gorski, 2011; Sebolt, 2018) which allow children and families' language, culture, history and background to be seen as assets and resources from which curriculum can be enriched. Strength-based education focuses on children and families' competencies as cultural and intellectual people. Through funds of knowledge as an inclusive strength-based theoretical framework (Moll et al., 1992) lives a complex pedagogy that attends to students' home life, their everyday lived experiences, and the

relationship of understanding built between the teacher and students (Hedges, Cullen, & Jordan, 2011).

This chapter has highlighted the multiple theoretical lenses that have helped crystalize and give shape, substance and direction to this research study. They served to both ground then give flight to taking up participatory research through a critical lens. In conversation with each other, these theoretical constructs have acted as windows into new ways of seeing the world and reading the world. They have also paved a new way of disrupting a world that until challenged, would continue to perpetuate itself.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

"You cannot understand a system until you try to change it" (Lewin, as cited in Schien, 1996, p. 34).

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research study was to explore what impact on the home-school interface relations would result when parents and teachers who share a child within a school year come together as equal knowledgeable participants within a co-created public sphere (Kemmis et al., 2014) or a third space (Soja, 1996, 2014) and share their respective funds of personal and professional knowledge. A second purpose was to also explore how creation of such a space would impact children's literacy development and enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participant's classrooms.

This chapter will discuss why critical participatory action research (PAR) presented itself as the methodology of choice for such an endeavor first by aligning my paradigmatic assumptions with those inherent in critical PAR, then discuss how this methodology sets itself apart and challenges the conventional and more traditional qualitative methods typically privileged by the academy. The research context, role of the participants and researcher, overview of the research design, methods of data creation and collection, constant comparative data analysis and synthesis of data, ethical considerations, limitations and criteria for validity will all be explained.

### **3.1 Positioning Myself as a Researcher**

My paradigmatic assumptions rest upon: (a) an ontological belief that multiple realities are situated in political, social and cultural contexts and are based on power and identity struggles; and, (b) an epistemological belief that reality is co-constructed, shaped by experiences



and known through the study of social structures, freedom and oppression, power and control. My critical theory-oriented stance suggests that reality can be altered through research (particularly through participatory, action research); and, (c) an axiological belief that diverse values always enter into human study, and should be honored and emphasized within the standpoint of contexts (Creswell, 2013; Heron & Reason, 1997; Merriam, 2009). The methodological beliefs that align with my paradigmatic assumptions point to approaches to inquiry that use collaborative processes of research based on assumptions of power relationships and struggles that call for action and change. The theoretical and ideological frameworks that guide methodology and choice of methods are derived from intersections between critical theory, social constructivism, and social constructionism allowing me to pursue social justice-oriented research seeking transformative learning for participants with the potential to provoke personal, professional and institutional change (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 2012; Freire, 1986; Giroux, 1987; Heron & Reason, 1997; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Moll, 2014; Schnellert et al., 2015; G. Simon, 2018; Talja, et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 1978; Young & Collin, 2004).

As a researcher, praxis, social justice, social action and change lay at the heart of my orientation to inquiry. Disrupting and challenging the boundaries and margins that have marked the territory and written the rules of engagement between home and school offers a glimpse into a space not commonly inhabited with the kind of intentionality and curiosity that lives within ethnographic methodology. My paradigmatic assumptions had me searching for an ethnographic methodology that pointed towards participation, change, disruption, action, and leaving an evocative footprint of hope, agency and passion behind in its wake. Critical participatory action research answered that call.

## 3.2 Critical Participatory Action Research

### 3.2.1 Disrupting traditional notions of research.

In action research, the attempt is not to bring practitioner's practices into conformity with (external) theorists' theories, but to have practitioners be theorists and researchers, that is, to give practitioners intellectual and moral control over their practice wherever their practice is justified by sustained and critical individual and collective self-reflection. Their critical participatory action research, as a practice-changing practice, is a self-reflective process of self-transformation—a process that transforms the sayings, doings and relatings that compose one's own life and the collective life of a class or a school or a community—sayings, doings, and relatings that give our life meaning, substance and value. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 26)

Critical participatory action research as a methodology according to Kemmis, et al., (2014) is less about applying a correct set of research techniques for "generating the kinds of generalizations that positivist and educational research aims to produce" and more about "helping people to understand and transform the way we do things around here . . . . *what happens here*—this single case - not what goes on anywhere or everywhere" (p. 67). Table 1 indicates differences between traditional correlational and experimental social education research and critical participatory action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Swantz, 2013):

<i>Table 1.</i> Research comparison chart.	
<b>Correlational and experimental social and educational research</b>	<b>Critical participatory action research</b>
Overall aim is to produce generalizable conclusions that point to best practices	The overarching aim is <u>not</u> to produce generalizations about the best way to do things within a situation and context
Generalizations need to be applicable to other situations	Transferability—findings are <u>not</u> generalized, but rather transferred from a context to another similar situation by a receiving context
Finding truths using valid and reliable measures and techniques that produce generalizations that apply elsewhere - all things being equal	Aims to help understand how things have come to be here in this context and how things might evolve to address and change those dissatisfactions in the future
Truth relies on proof of validity and objectivity	Validity is a matter of dialogical argumentation with truth by consensus rather than externally determined verification
Searching for and locating truths or best methods or practices	Evidence is collected and practices are documented in order to learn how to overcome dissatisfactions in this context
Data and evidence collected to represent past thinking and practices	Gathering evidence to understand past, present and future within spatial and temporal boundaries
Evidence is documented, analyzed, interpreted and disseminated by researcher(s)	Evidence is documented for analysis, interpretation, reflection and dissemination with others affected by what is being done
Seeks to answer questions, resolve problems, and contribute new knowledge	Raises questions, stimulates conversations and helps people change themselves, their practices and their understandings of their practices, and conditions under which they practice
Experts hold the knowledge and disseminate to others about what works best	Participants are co-producers of knowledge and become experts about their understandings, their practices, and the conditions under which they work and live
Individual-social dimension—research focuses on individuals, social structures or patterns across groups of people	Reflexive-dialectical view of individual-social relations and connections
Objective-subjective dimension—research focuses on and describes the behavior of participations or emphasizes the participants' own interpretations, emotions and intentions	

<i>Table 1.</i> Research comparison chart.	
<b>Correlational and experimental social and educational research</b>	<b>Critical participatory action research</b>
Evidence collected that is static representing the same practices and architectures of those practices.	Evidence is collected that documents changes over time (sayings, doings and relatings) Participants' individual or collective views, actions or relationships are not static, but dynamic and changing over time. Studying different changing practices and architectures of those practices over time.
Research about something or somebody	Research as participation in a public sphere with others to deliberate about and explore felt concerns about the nature and consequences of what is done together and how others are affected by those practices.
Researcher as scientist positioned with dominant knowledge	Researcher and researched share knowledge as equals

Participatory action research liberates and decentralizes research from conventional prescriptive methods and offers a radical alternative to knowledge development as a collective, self-reflective inquiry for the purpose of improving a contextualized situation such as a community or among a marginalized group of individuals (MacDonald, 2012). What sets the 'critical' nature of participatory action research aside from other forms of participatory research is the taking up of a critical view positioning participants to interrogate and explore their practices, understandings and conditions under which they practice. Practice as defined by Kemmis, et al., (2014) refers to what people say and think—their discourses or sayings, how they behave and act—their doings, and how they relate to their resources or to each other—their relatings. Identifying, locating and reflecting on practice helps people discover whether the nature and consequences of their ideas about their practice are rational and reasonable, productive and sustainable. It also facilitates examining their sayings, doings and relations as just and inclusive. Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) describe critical PAR as having an "epistemological critique about the ways in

which power is embedded and reinforced in the dominant (i.e. positivist) knowledge production system" (p. 178).

In terms of justice, critical participatory action research attends to the practices and social-political arrangements within a context that involve power relationships of domination or oppression. In terms of inclusion or exclusion, critical participatory action research attends to whether relationships within a context foster solidarity, belonging and inclusion or whether they actually cause conflict or exclusion (Kemmis et al., 2014). Critical PAR is a dynamic educative process that approaches social inquiry with the intent to take action that ultimately improves the situation of participants through a participatory transformative research framework (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kindon et al., 2007; Kemmis et al., 2014; MacDonald, 2012).

Critical participatory action research is positioned in "the understanding that people especially, those who have experienced historic oppression hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, [and] frame the interpretations of research" (Torre & Fine, 2006, p. 458). While challenging hierarchical power systems and structures, research grounded in critical PAR also contributes new and underrepresented voices and perspectives into the academic conversation that have been historically marginalized, silenced, or ignored (Cahill, 2007). Inclusion of the excluded has the potential to nudge scholarship in new directions by challenging taken for granted assumptions and entertaining new questions that contest the status quo (Cahill, 2007). Breitbart (2003) posits that participatory action research has a particular role in recovering knowledge "from below and creating social spaces where people can make meaningful contributions to their own well-being and not serve as objects of investigation" (p. 162).

Critical participatory action research offers an approach to research that generates interaction through relation between participants' knowledges and voices positioning them as equal and contributory co-researchers, rather than just passive subjects of research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Critical PAR as a methodology is grounded in a participatory worldview that recognizes and values all people as knowers with valuable socially and culturally rich knowledge and practices, but also as incomplete social beings who possess contributory potential. Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) claim that a strength of critical PAR is that it has the potential to blend professional knowledge with local knowledges resulting in more valid and convincing results than other forms of research. Wolch (as quoted in Staeheli & Mitchell, 2006), suggests that research becomes relevant when:

it conceptualizes an issue that is just beneath the level of the existing public agenda, or needs to be brought onto the public agenda. And it is framed in a way that allows people to understand how the results might actually affect day-to-day practice. (p. 362)

### **3.2.2 Research and researcher context.**

As action researchers, we work under the assumption that we are "in" the research, that we are both researchers and actors. There is no pretense of the neutral or objective observer, but rather, from the beginning we lay claim to the reality that we are "setting in action" research to address a local context and concern and that we are actively involved in the problem-solving process. (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 88)

My role within the school district positions my project as insider action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Holian & Cogan, 2013). Such insider inquiry must attend to three core elements that include: managing the tensions between closeness and distance (preunderstandings), organizational and researcher role (role duality), and managing

organizational politics (Holian & Cogan, 2013). Preunderstanding (or tacit knowledge) refers to my history, insights and experiences as a 28-year employee of the school district; particularly the last 15 years working with teachers and early childhood educators, school staffs, and their communities of families as the early learning and literacy coordinator. I was privileged to draw upon this vast network of teachers and their classroom family connections as potential participants/co-researchers in my critical PAR plan. My role in the school district is not supervisory, but shares equivalency in positional status with teachers. This technically positioned me as an insider researcher in collaboration with other insiders including both teachers and family members (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Holian & Cogan, 2013). In keeping with my ecological, family-centered perspective, it would be contradictory for me to consider family members as outsiders. Herr and Anderson (2015) emphasize the necessity to surface and articulate "to the best of our ability perspectives and biases and build a critical reflexivity into the research process" (p. 73) when conducting action research from an insider's perspective. I entered into the research process mindful of my positionality as district literacy coordinator with its perceived positional power and reflexively navigated this tension throughout the process.

The overall design of this critical participatory research study has consciously focused on the mesosystem relationships between parents and teachers that is only minimally represented in the home-school connection literature. Within this relationship parents and teachers worked together on behalf of the well-being of the children they shared within a school year. The space created by conscientization within participatory action research positioned parents, teachers, and ultimately children as active agents within the larger conversation located in Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological mesosystem. The scope of the study that focused on parent-teacher

relationships did not allow for further investigation into how this focus might impact children as literacy learners or as curricular informants in more than just a cursory way.

The participatory methods commonly used in critical PAR stress shared learning, shared knowledge and flexible yet structured collaborative analysis (Kindon et al., 2007). The researcher is required to relinquish control which opens the way for collective negotiation of meanings generated together. According to Swantz (2013), a researcher needs to be open to learn from participants by opening up a communicative space for all to share their knowledge as equals. "The researcher genuinely recognizes that she does not know the lifeworld, wisdom or meaning of central symbols of life of the co-researchers" (Swantz, 2013, p. 38) despite her positioning within the organization as an insider researcher. In this study, participants/co-researchers had opportunities to each share the ways in which they lived within the home-school interface. They discussed how welcoming family funds of knowledge into school literacy learning might change the interface relationships, and together created new practices, shared what they learned, then adapted and refined their actions moving forward. This cyclical process is an enactment of Freire's concept of praxis as an outcome of conscientization (Freire, 1976, 1999).

Kemmis (2013) posits that critical participatory action researchers are committed to exploring and discussing issues relevant to the circumstances of their own lives. In my role as first-hand participant, I co-researched alongside my co-researchers as equal participants able to reach "intersubjective agreements, mutual understandings, and uncoerced consensus" about what collaboratively emerged (Kemmis, 2013, p. 134).



### **3.2.3 Participants and participation within critical participatory action research.**

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), a common scenario for doctoral students pursuing PAR as a methodology is for a researcher to self-initiate a collaborative group while simultaneously exercising some control over the overarching question and facilitating the overall study to fit within time limits for dissertation completion. "Such studies are PAR to the extent that group members are involved in at least some phases of research, such as negotiation of the research questions or data analysis, and to the extent that participants' understandings are deepened or they are moved to action" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 112).

In keeping with the theoretical premises of PAR which places value on the knowledge produced in collaboration and action, conditions were co-created in this research study with teachers and parents to create and explore a space that equally welcomed their respective personal and professional funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Participants were recruited through invitation that stated the research questions up front and were able to self-determine their involvement based on their personal interest and curiosity in exploring such a space. Within critical PAR is a strong commitment to participation with others within cultural discursive spaces where conditions exist to also foster new learning within that space. As teachers and parents that shared a child for a school year, they entered into the research openly and willingly as co-researching partners. Current thinking about critical participatory action research calls for revitalization of the public sphere that promotes "decolonization of lifeworlds that have been saturated with bureaucratic discourses, routinized practices and institutionalized forms of social relationships" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 12).

Public spheres as a spatial concept is much in keeping with the notion of third space (Soja, 2010, 2014) and according to Kemmis, et al., (2014), are self-constituted, voluntary, and

come into existence because participants share questions about the legitimacy of practices or conditions under which people live and work. Participants in this research study were invited to explore the taken for granted ways they go about their everyday practices, specifically how they interact with each other within the home-school interface in the service of supporting their children's overall development and education.

Public spheres rely on interactive communication and public discourse over time between participants who typically are not familiar with each other (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Participants in this research study committed to join together in a research space with unfamiliar people for five research gatherings over four months. Public spheres are inclusive and permeable, presuppose communicative freedom and use ordinary language to break down barriers and hierarchies that typically belong to institutional Discourses (Gee, 1996, 2015; Kemmis, et al., 2014). Participants understood the voluntary nature of the research study and were free to end participation at any time. It is noteworthy that the two participants who discontinued participation did so as a result of prohibitive circumstances (medical leave and work conflicts) and not due to discomfort or lack of interest.

As norms were agreed upon within the research space, participants agreed to set aside their roles (teacher or parent) and come together as people with a shared interest in exploring, discussing and contributing their perspectives on how home and school connect and interact. Each participant was invited to bring their own world view, experiences and funds of knowledge into the space while listening to and respecting the views of others. Relationships established within communicative hybrid spaces such as the research space create an openness for respectfully and critically coming together to explore whether there may be better ways of conducting current practices. The time together during the research gatherings spent on storying

and dialoguing created the conditions for shaping such communicative action (Habermas, 1984; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) where participants were able to reach intersubjective agreement, not by virtue of obligation, but rather through reaching mutual understanding of one another's funds of knowledge, perspectives and points of view (Kemmis, et al., 2014).

Participants in this research study critically confronted established ways of doing things "caused by living with the consequences of the histories others make for us" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 598). Opening up communicative spaces or creating public spheres for transforming practice is the catalyst to transforming the world in which one finds oneself. Public spheres can indirectly impact social systems by generating possibilities among participants to find and support alternative ways of doing things within their spheres of influence—one person at a time (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Participants in this research study were able to move beyond constraints typically imposed on the home-school interface by institutional hierarchical roles and positions that determine whose voice speaks loudest with most influence. The critical participatory action research process they engaged in together created a social constructionist discursive space in which they were able to openly and respectfully explore whether there might be a different way to live together and practice within the home-school interface.

Critical PAR projects typically enter into collaborative processes from the very start through co-determination of research questions to help design the processes of inquiry. Since this project's purpose is embedded within a doctoral program, the overarching research questions were predetermined. The research study's pace and direction were bound within the framework of a dissertation timeline. The design of the critical participatory action research project was roughly predetermined, with the acknowledgment that as data-gathering and analysis proceeded, the process also required flexibility according to the dynamics and interests of the participants.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Participant recruitment.**

University ethics approval process began in November of 2016 and full approval was received from the university and school district at the end of January, 2017. Informal recruitment of teacher participants began in January, 2017 and formal recruitment emails were distributed to 36 early learning (kindergarten to grade 4) teachers who were teaching at 20/31 school sites within Central Okanagan School District as soon as approval was received. The recruitment process intentionally sought diversity through invitations to urban, suburban and rural school sites with the potential to recruit from a broad demographic representation.

The teacher recruitment email included a letter (see Appendix A) that described the intent of the research and an estimate of time commitment which included attending up to five research gatherings (focus groups) and keeping a research reflection journal between gatherings. Most importantly, teacher participants required a parent or family member research partner from their current classrooms. Interested teachers initially replied to me indicating whether or not they were interested in participating in the study. If they were interested, they were then invited to recruit parent or family member research partners. Once they had identified an interested parent or family member research partner, they provided me with their contact information and I forwarded the parent/family member recruitment letter (see Appendix B), as well as phoned potential participants upon request. If interested teacher participants were mentoring teacher candidates during the time of the study, a recruitment letter was also forwarded to them (see Appendix A).

By February 25, 2017, 11 teachers, 11 parents and two teacher candidates had committed to participating in the research study which included completing the informed participant consent

forms (see Appendix C). These participants represented eight school sites including, four urban, two suburban, and two rural locations including kindergarten to grade four. The community linguistic and cultural demographics as reported through Statistics Canada (2017) (see Appendix D) align closely to the demographics represented within the participant group. Each grouping of participants was referred to as a research cluster (See Table 2).

<i>Table 2. Participant research clusters and demographics.</i>										
Research cluster	Teachers/Teacher Candidates		Teacher years of experience			Gender	Parents	Gender	Grade	English as Additional Language
1	1		23			F	2	F	4	1
2	2	1	3	22	TC	F	1	F	2/3	1
3	1		25			F	*1	F	4	
4	1		7			F	2	F	2	
5	*2		3	1		1F 1M	1	F	K	
6	2		36	37		F	3	2 F 1 M	K	
7	1	1	19	TC		F	N*		2	
8	1		1			F	1	M	1	

(\*N- parent interviewed with intention of attending research gatherings, but did not. Teachers continued to participate in anticipation of parent participation. Parent interview not included in research data).

Twenty-two pre-inquiry semi-structured interviews were conducted and audio-recorded between February 11 and March 2 (See Appendix E). The first research gathering took place on March 2. Due to scheduling complications the final two pre-inquiry interviews were conducted on March 3 and March 6. One teacher participant (\*cluster 5) left the research study due to a medical leave after attending the first research gathering. This teacher's replacement willingly agreed to step into the research process, was interviewed on April 17, and joined the third research gathering on April 26. (This increased the number of teacher participants to 12 and both

teachers' pre-inquiry interviews are included in the data). One parent participant (\*cluster 3) was interviewed and attended the second research gathering only. Although she was hoping to participate further, a change in her work schedule prevented her from any further participation. She wished to continue receiving research gathering notes and occasionally offered reflections through email. Only her pre-inquiry interview is included in the data.

11/12 teachers, 10/11 parents, 2/2 teacher candidates continued through the research study and sat for post-inquiry semi-structured audio-recorded interviews in June, July and September of 2017. (See Appendix I). Transcriptions from the pre-inquiry interviews were completed by a transcriber in April of 2017, followed by transcriptions of the post-inquiry interviews completed by the same transcriber by the end of October, 2017.

The research gatherings all took place at a neutral and private location (Coffee House in central Kelowna) and beyond the first gathering, subsequent dates were determined collectively by the participants. The research group met for periods of two hours over the course of five evenings during the spring of 2017. (See Table 3 for participant attendance). Five participants accepted the childcare supplement for different research gatherings. A total of 13 childcare supplements at \$20 each were distributed during the course of the five month research study.

<i>Table 3. Participant attendance.</i>						
	March 2	April 4	April 26	May 17	June 14	Participant Total
T1	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	4
T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T4	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	4
T5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T8	✓					1
T9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
T12			✓	✓	x	2
TC1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
TC2	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	4
P1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
P2	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	4
P3	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	4
P4	✓	✓	x	✓	x	3
P5	✓	✓	x	✓	x	3
P6	x	✓	✓	x	✓	3
P7	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	4
P8	x	✓	✓	x	✓	3
P9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
P10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
P11	x	✓	x	x	x	1
Group Total	21	23	18	20	18	

### **3.3.2 Data creation and gathering.**

The primary purpose of gathering evidence in critical PAR is to nurture self-reflection within the process of conscientization (Freire, 1976; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Lykes & Mallona, 2013). In the case of this research study, the aims were to ultimately capture how my thinking and the thinking of others transformed as a result of co-creating discursive spaces for sharing funds of knowledge for literacy development and how this impacts the interface relations between home and school and the lived curriculum in classrooms.

Attending to spatiality and temporality are integral to the research process within critical PAR. Gathering data for critical PAR is about capturing how things change over time from before, during and after through the research process. Variants of the same questions were asked to explore participants' past, present and future practices or their sayings, doings and relatings within the home-school interface. Data from this research study included transcribed pre-inquiry interviews representing participants' prior practices within the home-school interface. Additional forms of data included participant journals, both researcher and participant field notes from research gatherings, researcher field notes from school visits, post-inquiry interviews, field notes from a presentation to a B.Ed. class, and emails between participants and researcher. A collaboratively created visual canvas was created during our last research gathering and is also a source of data. (See Appendix F).

Pre and post-inquiry semi-structured interviews (audio-recorded and transcribed) anchored the bookends of the research process (February, 2017 to October, 2017). The research gatherings (March to June) were video-recorded using a web camera and laptop computer. I then transcribed the recordings shortly after each gathering. The video-recordings captured whole group discussions, but did not record small group discussions. The gathering transcriptions



contributed to my field notes. Collaborative documentation (Nygren, 2009, 2010) is a variation of field notes that participants collectively engage in during events and activities. During participants' small group discussions a recorder in each group took notes on paper that became the participant field notes. I typed the notes and sent them through email to the participants prior to the next gathering. The notes were also printed and distributed at the beginning of each gathering. Participants were invited to review the notes, reflect upon them and use them as part of their ongoing discussions with each other, as well as to support their journal reflections.

In critical PAR all participants are invited to keep track of their own processing and experiences through some form of record keeping like journals so their ongoing reflections can be shared with other participants as a way to make learning and transformation continuously visible and interactive. Kemmis et al., (2014) explain that:

Every participant in a critical participatory research initiative is a window into what happens in the setting participants share: a window into that world—their world. Each is a living source of evidence and perspectives—not a static record of evidence. (p. 177)

Blank journals were provided to each participant and 21/25 used them to record observations, ideas, interpretations, feelings, reactions, hunches and reflections and provided them to me at the conclusion of the research process. Participants often brought their journals with them to the research gatherings and used them to record thoughts and take notes. Some participants shared their journals with each other during small group dialogues. I returned the journals to participants if they wanted them when data analysis was completed. Participant emails have also been used as part of the overall data collection.

As the final research gathering in June approached, both the gravity of the process and sense of impending finality suggested a need for us as a collective to somehow celebrate and

capture our time together in a more permanent and visual way. Ledwith and Springett (2014) call such invitations "acts of connection" (p. 204) through unifying celebratory activities which play an important role in participatory practice. As a way to celebrate the space and time we shared together, participants were invited to contribute to a visual artifact in the form of a large round canvas. The concept of the canvas itself was conceived by one of the participants who painted it in preparation for all participants to contribute their own personalized and visual representations of their voice and presence in the research space. (See Appendix F for a photograph of the completed canvas).

I was invited to attend literacy events in two school sites co-organized by co-researchers in two research clusters in June, 2017. Consent forms were distributed to the parents of the children in participating classrooms, then collected by the teacher co-researchers in both clusters (See Appendix G). At one site, the parent co-researcher along with his mother visited the classroom to share their historical community knowledge with the children. I took photos, recorded video and kept field notes. At the second site, the teacher co-researcher partnered with a same grade (non-participant) colleague from the school and planned an event that brought together over one hundred children and their family members. The parent co-researcher's family from this cluster participated in the literacy event. I took photos, recorded video and kept field notes.

Two teacher and partner parent participants representing two research clusters were invited to share their research experiences, thoughts and ideas that pertained to home-school connections with two sections of a B.Ed. university diversities class on October 16. I took field notes during each class and included these in the field note data analysis.

As researcher, I also kept a double-entry journal which is a hybrid between field notes and a research journal with reflections and observations on the left-hand page and interpretations, connections, and theorizing on the right-hand page (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This journal has been a chronicle of the research process, a record of my thinking, feelings and impressions, and a place where I have recorded ongoing connected literature readings that informed my own process of conscientization.

Critical PAR offers a process for engaging participants as knowledge builders, questioners of the status quo and change makers while positioning the actual process of research as a vehicle for social change. It is crucial that research not be separated from life and that knowledge gained from research become part of people's practices (Swantz, 2013). By including historically excluded perspectives in the critique and advancement of new knowledge, critical PAR also pushes scholarship in new directions, reinforcing its value as a research methodology. Breitbart (2003) further reinforces PAR's potential contribution: "The data it [critical PAR] produces are more likely to be useful, accurate and lead to actions that address people's real needs and desires" (p. 175).

### **3.3.3 Research gatherings within third space.**

Any kind of action research sets itself apart from traditional social science research in that it demands some form of intervention that serves to disrupt saying, doing and relating rather than just documenting what has already transpired and existed. These interventions typically develop through "spirals of action cycles" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 5) within public spheres of communicative action. The concept of spirals was used to influence the design of the five research gatherings:

- observe and reflect on lived experiences—storying, dialoguing and problematizing, critical reflection or meta-awareness;
- co-plan, act locally;
- observe and reflect on lived experiences—storying, dialoguing and problematizing, critical reflection or meta-awareness; and,
- collective, communicative action with others in a wider context, (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2010).

While the cyclical process was used as an overarching design framework for the research gatherings, the nature of the context required emergence and fluidity as the process moved along because the design of gatherings was also informed by Freire's notion of conscientization (Freire, 1976; 1999; Souto-Manning, 2010). The concept of 'conscientization' is an awakening or increasing in consciousness or critical meta-awareness. It is key to Freire's philosophy that has influenced the critical theorist's world view (Crotty, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2010). Inherent in critical PAR as a methodology is its reciprocal relationship between research and action and between personal and social transformation. Praxis, as defined by Freire, is humans' ability to transform their social reality as a result of coming together in dialogue and critical reflection that informs collective action (Freire Institute, 2016). Freire's epistemology and ontology is well represented within critical participatory action research. Humans, according to Freire, are called to be re-creators, not mere spectators of the world.

Creating discursive third spaces that bring multiple voices together aligns with Freire's (1976) notion of praxis mediated through dialogue. It is through dialogue that people are able to reflect together on what they know and don't know in order to critically transform their reality

(Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Shor & Freire, 1987; Souto-Manning, 2010). Dialogue presupposes that we talk with one another, not at one another (Brock, 2010). Dialogue is genuine when people come to know and understand other's perspectives often resulting in transformed perspectives (Allen, 2007; Brock, 2010). This perspective posits that without dialogue, there can be no conscientization, no critical thinking and subsequently no transformation. In dialogical education, learners and educators are regarded as equally important and knowledgeable subjects (Freire, 1976; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Within critical PAR exists the potential for Freire's (1976) notion of dialogic communicative spaces or Kemmis et al.'s (2014) public spheres to create conditions for hybrid Discourses (Gee, 1996) to emerge where participants recreate their practices, understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which their practices are carried out (Kemmis, et al., 2014).

### **3.3.4 Spirals of action with the process of *conscientization*.**

Spirals of action were used as a guiding framework within Freire's participatory process of conscientization that guided the shape of the research gatherings. The process of conscientization (Freire Institute 2016; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Lykes & Mallona, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2010) includes three main elements: storying, dialoguing, and critical reflection which then leads to some form of collectively constructed action. Kindon et al. (2007) also state that the most common methods used in PAR focus on dialogue, storytelling and collective action while Kemmis, et al., (2014) think of PAR as a way to open up communicative space for dialogue that leads to communicative action. These elements, processes and methods contributed to the design and framework of each research gathering within the research study exploring the

home-school interface which included storying, dialoguing, critical reflection and collective communicative action (See Figure 1).

## Conscientization

A participatory process of connecting by living and learning in and with each other and the world. A dialectical and iterative process of action-reflection-transformation.

(Freire, 1976; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2010)

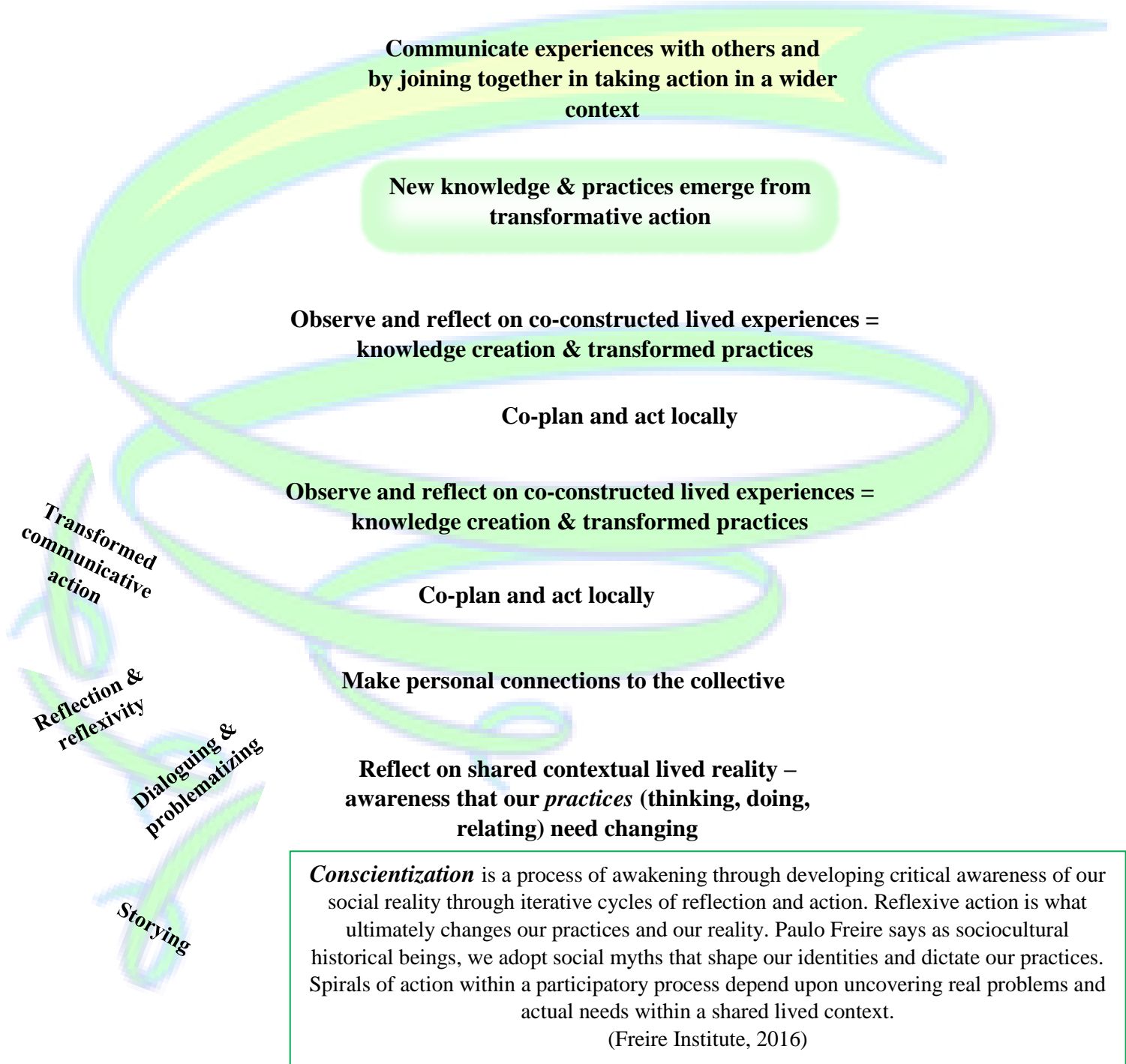


Figure 1. Spirals of action within the process of *Conscientization*.

### **3.3.5 Storying.**

Storying is the entry way into dialogue and coming to know our own stories is the beginning of becoming critical (Kindon et al., 2007; Ledwith & Springett, 2014). Participants throughout the research process were encouraged to tell their own stories as a way to share their lifeworld experiences and funds of personal and professional knowledge. The foundation of critical dialogue is how we listen with respect to the little stories of life as experienced by others who live within our shared realities. It is the crux at which trusting mutual relations are formed. Ledwith and Springett (2014) explain that when we openly listen to the stories of others, we attend to their ways of knowing which shifts the focus away from judgment towards listening from the heart; an empathetic connected knowing has potential to create collective alliances across differences. T6 and P6 in their post-inquiry interviews both shared how the impact of storying as part of the research process helped shape their communicative space:

T6: The whole group was really creating a family and a network and support. Those people were there to listen and just caring. It felt really good and wholesome. We had such a culturally diverse group within this network and it was fascinating to hear their different backgrounds and that's not something that continues to deepen and reiterate that we all have these backgrounds and stories, but there is a common thread no matter where we come from on our globe or our experiences or what culture or language—that there is need for connection. The feeling of being connected and that there is a place for us all—it felt really comfortable.

P6: I really liked people sharing their stories. I'd never experienced that, so I had no idea what it felt like or what the parents were going through or how they could deal with it. I thought that was really valuable. I thought of it more as community.



Storying removed pre-existing positional, institutional and hierarchical barriers between participants and through sharing their narratives, participants were able to enter safely into dialogue.

### **3.3.6 Dialoguing and problematizing.**

To enter into dialogue presumes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the other; there must be mutual respect, care and commitment (Ledwith & Springett, 2014). Freire's notion of authentic dialogue embodies the values of participation, identifies and equalizes power in dialogical relationships, and relies on humility, hope, faith and mutual trust in which each person holds the potential to both teach and learn (Freire, 1976; Shor & Freire, 1987). "As a democratic relationship, dialogue is the opportunity available . . . to open up the thinking of others, and thereby not wither away in isolation" (Freire, 1994, p. 110). Noddings (2005) writes of dialogue as being a common search for understanding, empathy and appreciation that connects us to each other and helps develop and maintain caring relationships. Storying naturally leads to dialoguing and participants grew in their comfort to be vulnerable storytellers and empathetic story listeners with and for one another.

Dialogue can lead to problematizing and deconstructing socially constructed definitions and values that once held absolute truths. In problematizing dialogue participants "reflect on the lives they lead, asking questions to discover their meaning and value" (Shor, 1993, p. 30). In problem-posing dialogue participant's prior knowledge is of value. As active agents in a learning process they can begin to critically reconceptualize their knowledge as they learn from each other and become inspired and challenged by others' experiences and perspectives (Cue & Casey, 2017; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2010). Such knowledge production and creation can form the impetus for social action. Dialogue is neither conversation nor debate; it is

a process of learning together, a relational exchange allowing for trust and respect to guide new understandings and perspectives while problematizing new questions about lived realities. Dialogic problem solving is about connected knowing that engages the emotions that can move toward agency and action. Ledwith and Springett (2014) state that "dialogic knowledge is relational knowledge" (p. 129) subject to continuous evolution and refinement based on co-creation within new experiences because the power of connection with others leads to new ways of knowing, being and relating.

Both P4 and T12 in their post-inquiry interview reflected on how dialogue opened their communicative space for connected knowing and learning of and with each other within the research process:

P4: The connecting with my kid's teacher in and out of school context and in a way where we could have thoughtful, insightful conversations that weren't necessarily specific to my child but in general. Just the connections that were made, that was great and was the most important.

T12: It was a wonderful experience to get the chance to connect with parents outside of school and getting a chance to have conversations and really just seeing everyone open to new ideas and open to the type of collaboration that can happen when you bring parents into the education process.

Ledwith and Springett (2014) assert that knowledge creation becomes a living process within a space informed by dialogue, and in this way, dialogue is located at the heart of praxis. In this critical PAR process, storying and dialoguing were accompanied by critical reflection – "a key element of learning and development and a crucial dimension in the process of transformation" (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p. 154).

### **3.3.7 Becoming critical: Reflection and reflexivity.**

Ledwith and Springett (2014) assert that through dialogue and reflection, people learn to question the stories they tell, and by examining them a little more critically discover the source of oppressions. They further explain: "Critical reflexivity . . . involves going even deeper into questioning the taken-for-grantendness of life and its pivotal role in [meaning making and] transformative learning" (p. 151) that opens the path to reflection with action as praxis or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1976, p. 36). The processes of storying, dialoguing and problematizing followed by critical reflection or enactment of critical meta-awareness (Souto-Manning, 2010) allowed participants in this critical PAR process to engage socially and relationally with others in a process of mutual inquiry while at the same time contributing to the expansion of each other's knowledge and knowledge of each other (Giroux, 1987; Thayer-Bacon, 2003).

The process of reflexivity in comparison to reflection according to Jacobs (2008) occurs within both reflecting inwards on oneself as an inquirer, while also living within the action or the doing that challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions about one's world. It creates the conditions and context for questioning and problematizing one's lived reality (Schnellert, Richardson, & Cherkowski, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2010). Ledwith and Springett (2014) add: "This *epistemological reflexivity* helps us to see how the way we view the world influences the way we choose to act in it" (p. 157). Through personal reflexivity and knowledge construction, our world can be changed as our understandings about what is possible also changes. With critical consciousness, or in Freirian pedagogical terms - conscientization, emotion is generated through reflection and knowledge is created through relation and dialogue which all act together

to motivate people to see life more critically and take action with the belief that change is possible (Freire, 1976; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Lykes & Mallona, 2013).

T10, P1, and T6 all critically reflected upon openings and shifts in their thinking as a result of experiencing conscientization together and individually within the research process:

T10: It's made me more mindful of connections with parents. We're actually going to change things we are going to do now. We are going to make sure we see the family and the home as important as we are in the education of the child especially as K teachers we can really make an impact on those children in such a positive way and make sure there are more opportunities for connections with their parents. (Field Notes, June 14)

P1: It was really a lot of learning and really I could feel in that room - so many great brains. I could feel that energy there, that positive energy. I felt like we need to do something positive for this society together. (Post-Interview)

T6: It's a relationship and there's a voice on both sides and we really need to honor the families that we're working with, rather than just the teacher having their vision and just really inviting that perspective of family and their values, as well. Teachers still need to initiate it because they're in that role, but now my thinking has changed in how long that power needs to be there. (Post-Interview)

In this critical PAR process, critical reflection, critical consciousness and reflexivity wove together into action (critical praxis), which facilitated participant's decision making around what actions will change their respective sayings, doings and ways of relating within the home-school interface.

### 3.3.8 Collective communicative action.

In critical participatory action research, the reciprocity between practitioner-researchers and others in a setting is amplified still further: responsibility for the research is taken collectively, by people who act and research together in the first person (plural) as 'we' or 'us'. ...What is to be transformed in critical participatory action research is not only activities and their immediate outcomes...but also the social formation in which the practice occurs—the discourses (*sayings*) . . . that orient and inform it, the things that are done (*doings*), and the patterns of social relationships between those involved and affected (*relatings*). (Kemmis et al., 2014, pp 16-17).

The process of conscientization or becoming critical must also become a collective process of taking action if it is to be truly liberating (Ledwith & Springett, 2014). Freire believed that liberation must be a socially created collective construct (Shor & Freire, 1987). Thayer-Bacon's (2010) relational (e)pistemology includes a relational approach that believes knowing is something that people develop as they have experiences with each other and the world around them. Collective action through a participatory approach calls upon participants to be "social-beings-in-relation-with others, not as isolated individuals" (Thayer-Bacon, 2010, p. 172).

Since practices are established in social interactions between people, changing practice is also a social process, therefore, the ultimate goal of critical PAR is to study, reframe and reconstruct our own social practices. Participation through action makes the research contextual (Swantz, 2013). Critical PAR, therefore, brings the knowledges of lifeworlds together into collective consciousness by opening up communicative spaces for collective transformational action where intersubjective agreement can be reached (Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis, et al., 2014). "[C]ritical participatory action research involves the investigation of *actual* practices, not

practices in the *abstract*...[the] principal concern is in changing practices in the 'here and now' . . . to change 'the way we do things around here'" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 20).

P2, P10 and T5 shared resolve in moving beyond the research process with a sense of transformed collective and personal agency:

P2: I'm going to talk about this experience—if 25 of us take our experience and take it out into the world and we affect five people and they effect five people—we are going to change the world. I truly want to disrupt what is being done (Post-Interview and Journal Reflection, May 17).

P10: When we think about small groups and how we can make a difference I think one key aspect comes to mind. As leaders we are setting an example to learn and follow. We may not think it is doing much but it plants a seed for others to grow from as we never always see or grasp the changes happening around us. (Journal Reflection, April 26)

T5: What really struck me and is staying with me is that during the opening circle several parents said that they really felt that the group and the work was so important because we have a chance to make lasting change. I find this amazing that they really see the value in this group and really feel that it can make a difference. I love the agency! Belief that this small group can make a difference! (Journal Entry, April 26).

hooks (1990) describes space as powerful in shaping the way we are and by being shaped by space we learn how to belong in that space. Critical participatory action research is a methodology that relies on creating space where participants can collectively author new narratives of transformation to promote social change. Conscientization within critical PAR also invites participants to engage in critical meta-awareness to become "individually conscientized" (Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 42) and discover agency in their own narratives to further promote

change in their own lives. (For a more comprehensive summary of the research gathering proceedings, see Appendix H).

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Constant comparative method.**

The constant comparative method . . . includes that every part of data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, properties, and dimensions as well as different parts of the data, are constantly compared with all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences in data. The constant comparative method . . . is strict enough to be helpful to the researcher in exploring the content and meaning in the data. (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143)

I have used a constant comparative data analysis method within a critical participatory action research methodology (Creswell, 2013; Hallberg, 2006). Patterns, categories, and themes were built from the bottom up and were organized inductively into sets of themes. Throughout this iterative process, I also continued to deductively check and recheck these themes against the data to ensure each "category earn[ed] its way into the analysis...rather than being generated from the [any] hypotheses and preconceptions" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143). The analytic steps that made the most sense to me with the amount of data I worked with included: open coding, focused coding, categories and theoretical concepts.

#### **3.4.2 Pre-inquiry interviews data analysis.**

##### **3.4.2.1 *Level one analysis: Open codes.***

Once data from pre-inquiry audio-recorded interviews were transcribed in April of 2017, descriptive codes were assigned to participants (P#; T#). I began the process using constant comparative data analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Hallberg, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Richards & Morse, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) which included continuously reading

and rereading the transcripts to inductively identify emergent themes and categories. For ease of organization, I refer to this step in the process as level one analysis which produced inductively-derived open codes. I was able to generate labels for these initial codes from both the language of the participant's responses, as well as my own emerging conceptions. Fourteen initial codes were generated from the parent interviews and 14 slightly different initial codes generated from teacher interviews which enabled clustering of data into categories or what I named level one codes. At this point in the process, the use of the word *door* in both parent and teacher interview data seemed to be of significance (9/14 teachers and 4/11 parents). I spent time analyzing this theme through memo writing and diagramming what the concept of door appeared to represent for teachers and parents. Charmaz (2014) explains that the bottom-up approach of data analysis gives the method its strength "when I ask analytic questions of the data—the researcher's subjectivity provides a way of viewing, engaging, and interrogating the data" (p. 247). Why were doors mentioned frequently? Did door mean the same thing for teachers as it did for parents? As I tinkered with doors conceptually and created a diagram (see Figure 2) to represent my interpretations of the use of the word door, I also began to think of door metaphorically. Might door help theorize the experience of participants within the home-school interface prior to their engagement in the participatory research process?

A PAR study may be participatory in every phase or in only some phases of the process. It is not uncommon according to Herr and Anderson (2015) to invite participants to voluntarily participate in aspects of data analysis in participatory action research as a means to include their voices and thinking through the feedback cycles of action and reflection. Keeping this in mind, I shared my emergent theorizing of how door as a metaphor had surfaced for me during level one data analysis during the June 14 final research gathering. Research clusters dialogued with the



diagrams and reflected upon the metaphor then shared their impressions with the larger group. Their participant field notes then became part of the larger data set.

#### **3.4.2.2 *Level two analysis: Focused coding into categories.***

Post-inquiry semi-structured audio recorded interviews were completed by September, 2017 and transcribed by end of October, 2017 (see Appendix I). While waiting for transcription to conclude, I commenced the next iteration of data analysis of the pre-inquiry interviews which for ease of organization, I reference as level two analysis. This process included collapsing the level one codes and focused the data into fewer categories by noting similarities, differences and patterns. This helped to further integrate the data into more focused categories or themes. Charmaz (2014) refers to this next stage of data analysis as building categories that render the data most effectively into broader stronger themes and states: "Such strong categories contain crucial properties that make data meaningful and carry the analysis forward" (p. 247). This process generated five level two categories for clustering parent interview data and four level two categories for clustering teacher interview data.

#### **3.4.2.3 *Level three analysis: Theoretical concepts.***

The final iteration or level three of focused coding into categories combined the parent interview level two categories with the teacher interview level two categories into five level three theoretical concepts. Raising categories to theoretical concepts focuses further analytic refinement by connecting their relationships to other concepts (Charmaz, 2014) (See Appendix J). This constant comparative process using the participants' pre-inquiry interviews resulted in a metaphorical and theoretical representation of the first phase of the research study which is called *Doors*.

Theoretical concepts serve as interpretive frames and offer an abstract understanding of relationships. Theoretical concepts subsume lesser categorizes with ease and by comparison hold more significance, account for more data, and often make crucial processes more evident...Rather than discovering order *within* the data, we create an explication, organization, and presentation *of* the data. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 248, original emphasis)

### **3.4.3 Post-research gathering data analysis: Journals and field notes.**

#### **3.4.3.1 *Level one analysis: Open codes.***

Once post-inquiry interviews were concluded, I began analyzing participant (10/11 parent and 12/14 teacher and teacher candidate) journals using the same process as I used for the pre-inquiry interviews. Open initial coding lead to 10 level one codes from parent participant journals and 10 level one codes from teacher participant journals. The same process was applied to the research gathering researcher field notes. Data was first organized according to individual participant contributions, then later assigned open codes. Fourteen codes emerged. A frequency table was also created to illustrate how often a participant's contribution fit within each of the 14 codes. At this point patterns and themes began to emerge that lead to memo writing, diagramming and re-diagramming. The participant field notes were next organized into a table according to date and topics that had emerged during the gatherings. Data recorded by participants from each of the gatherings were organized into four codes each with the exception of May 17 which had five codes (see Appendix K).

### **3.4.4 Post-inquiry data analysis: Interviews, journals, researcher, participant field notes.**

#### **3.4.4.1 *Level one analysis: Open codes.***

Once the post-inquiry interviews were transcribed at the end of October, the same data analysis process was used. At level one, 14 initial codes were created from the parent interviews, with 13 codes from teacher interviews. Deductive analysis resulted in emerging repetitive patterns and threads of continuity which transitioned into more focused codes and categories.

#### **3.4.4.2 *Level two and level three analysis: Focused codes, categories and theoretical concepts.***

This analysis lead to more focused level two categories which resulted in five categories for parent interviews and five somewhat, but not completely identical categories for teacher interviews. Data from the level one codes from journals, researcher and participant field notes were assigned and added to the level two interview category tables. Similar to the process encountered with the pre-inquiry interviews, the next step at level three was to integrate both parent and teacher data tables resulting in three overarching theoretical concepts representing three additional phases of the research. Each phase represents the temporal progression of the research study and is a container in which theoretical concepts are positioned. Each phase was also defined using metaphorical themes that emerged from the language of the participants across all data sets. Phase two represented as “Tapestry,” phase three as “Bridge,” and phase four as “Ripples.” Selective coding was then used to code the dimensions of each phase resulting in five theoretical concepts within Tapestry- phase two, five theoretical concepts within Bridge- phase three, and three theoretical concepts within Ripples- phase four. At this point, in order to thoroughly answer the three original research questions, an additional level three analysis was

completed looking at data categories specific to children's literacy development and to classroom curriculum enrichment. Five theoretical concepts emerged pertaining to literacy and curriculum.

My field notes from four participants speaking in B.Ed. diversity classes on October 16, 2017 were the final data to be analyzed and organized into five level two categories that were collapsed into the larger metaphoric and literacy/curriculum theoretical concept containers (see Appendix L). Field note data from school site visits was not analyzed for the purposes of this dissertation, but may be used for future analysis and reference.

As the constant comparative analysis proceeded, I felt the need to get closer to each participant as an individual to better understand and locate any little stories within the bigger narrative. I separated contributions of each participant from the data sources and created 24 poster summaries to reflect participant's data as individual profiles. This process did help me to get closer to the data in a different way than open coding and categorizing as previously described. This data organization and analysis did not really become significant until writing the introduction to the dissertation when the relevance of highlighting certain individual stories emerged.

The final data creation activity invited all participants during the last research gathering on June 14 to reflect upon the research questions and place their written and/or visual responses on a painted canvas as another way to help tell our research story. (See Appendix F). Tolia-Kelly (2010) writes of using visual methodology in participatory research to help further crystallize data: "Making voices and perspectives tangible in a visual form adds scope for unexpected or new grammars (constellations of words and meanings not usually encountered or expected by a researcher ...) and vocabularies that are sometimes inexpressible in other contexts" (p. 132). The participants' written and visual contributions were later analyzed using an internet-based program

called word cloud which is a graphical representation of word frequency which synthesizes what collectively meant the most to the participants at that point in time. (See Appendix M for the final word cloud). The participants' written contributions have been used to engage their presence and include their voices in the composition of this written dissertation.

### **3.4.5 Data representation.**

#### **3.4.5.1 *Ethical considerations.***

Since critical PAR researchers are both researching and acting through the process, ongoing inductive and deductive data analysis is imperative within the process. Herr and Anderson (2015) advise that a PAR study may be participatory in every phase or in only some phases of the process. In this research process, participant field notes were collated, typed and distributed to participants after each research gathering. Research clusters were invited to discuss the notes and participate in synthesis activities that represented their collective reflections. This became a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where doctoral students, as part of the iterative process, can present back their understandings to help guide future actions and research decisions. Once data from pre-inquiry interviews were analyzed, a metaphor (door) surfaced and a visual was created. The metaphor and visual were shared with participants during the final research gathering in June and through dialogue they together engaged in analysis. This was an example of member checking that was not so much for soliciting approval from participants/co-researchers, as it was attending to the collaborative nature of the process by seeking and acknowledging the multiple perspectives involved. Despite the collaborative process of participatory action research, the actual writing of this dissertation was an individual task. Ultimately, "it is the doctoral student's understanding that is presented and defended to the academic community" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 106).

Kemmis, et al., (2014) remind us that professionals such as teachers are already governed by ethical and legal requirements of the teaching profession and that there is more overlap than boundaries between research ethics and the ethics inherent in teaching practice. As a doctoral researcher, I am aware of the importance of my ethical responsibilities to represent the stories told by my participants, along with responsibilities associated with ethical concerns such as anonymity, confidentiality, ownership of stories, researcher-participant familiarity, the relational responsibility toward others in the stories being told and the ways in which all are represented.

#### **3.4.6 Role of researcher, limitations and criteria for validity.**

Despite careful attention to the complexities and intricacies inherent in critical participatory action research, I also recognize the importance of acknowledging both delimitations and limitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This begins with my own role as researcher. Swantz (2013) contends that: "The researcher who participates in research with the community cannot claim the traditional researcher's distance and thus have a view as an independent observer" (p. 43). I am a teacher in a consultant position living and working in the same school district as the teacher and parent participants. Having worked as an educator in various positions over 28 years and my familiarity with many aspects of the school district, it might suggest that being such an insider makes me too close to the research. Although I have no supervisory responsibilities, my position as a consultant might provoke perceptions of authority and power among the participants. I was also mindful of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) advice about "how to experience the experience," while negotiating tensions of establishing trust, balancing involvement, and maintaining researcher distance. They propose that navigation "with the tensions is of more importance than merely naming them" (p. 81). Nurturing liminal conditions within the participatory research space was a constant internal negotiation to which I

kept at the forefront of my thinking and acting. I knew that as a researcher with an explicit agenda working towards a doctorate had implications for how participants would position me. At the same time, I tried to position myself on the periphery of the process as both a listener and contributor as well as a facilitator and participant. I reminded participants that the research space invited all of our voices equally - including mine.

Limitations included time constraints as a result of organizing the research to fit within the latter half of a school year, participant commitment to attending five research gatherings over four months, and a restricted sample size of 25 participants. The context and location of research within one school district, and my positioning as insider researcher also present potential inherent biases.

Critical PAR appealed to me as a researcher because it moves the boundaries of scholarship beyond doing research for the sake of research. What inspired me most was the opportunity to be part of a collective and collaborative process with the potential to create footprints of disruption and transformation well beyond the bookmarks of the research itself. I must also acknowledge an additional personal vested interest in working towards a doctorate.

Critical participatory action research, like much of qualitative research does not conform to conventional positivist validation criteria (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Swantz, 2013). Trustworthiness is the preferred criteria used for qualitative research, however quality indicators of action research are also interested in action-oriented outcomes that go beyond knowledge generation (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Rahman (2013) cites the work of Mozer (1980), an early pioneer in the field of participatory action research: "PAR has its own criterion of validity which is a matter of dialogical argumentation, with the truth being a matter of consensus rather than verification by any externally determined standards" (Rahman, 2013, p.

50). Herr and Anderson (2015) and Heron (1996) take forward this same argument and propose using the term “validity” for strategic reasons in defending the legitimacy needed when completing an action research-based dissertation. Six validity criteria are aligned to the goals of action research which include: generation of new knowledge—dialogic and process validity; achievement of action-oriented outcomes—outcome validity; education of researcher and participants—catalytic validity; relevancy of results to local context—democratic validity; a sound and appropriate research methodology—process validity; and, authentic relationships—relational validity. Table 4 displays these six validity criteria with aligning evidence from this research study:

<i>Table 4. Action research validity criteria and research study evidence.</i>	
<b>Action research: Validity criteria</b>	<b>Research study: Criteria evidence</b>
Process validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• findings are a result of reflective cycles over time that include ongoing dialogue and problematizing</li> <li>• crystallization of data using multiple data sources</li> </ul>	✓ the complete study occurred over a total of 8 months including five research gatherings using cycles of storying, dialoguing and problematizing, critical reflection and reflexivity, and collective communicative action ✓ data crystallization: pre and post interviews, researcher and participant field notes, participant journals, visual canvas, school site visits
Outcome validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which actions occur that speak to the research questions</li> <li>• quality of data upon which action is based</li> </ul>	✓ evidence of transformative practices (thinking, acting, relating) ✓ multiple data sources (see above)
Catalytic validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• researcher and participants have a deepened understanding and reoriented view of their social reality and practices within it</li> <li>• participants take some form of transformative action</li> </ul>	✓ reflected in cyclical research process and through the phases of data created over time ✓ intersubjectivity and hybrid discourse represented through metaphoric language ✓ through process of conscientization and reflected in data representing collective communicative action



<i>Table 4. Action research validity criteria and research study evidence.</i>	
<b>Action research: Validity criteria</b>	<b>Research study: Criteria evidence</b>
Democratic validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborative research reflecting multiple perspectives and diversity</li> <li>• localized relevancy</li> </ul>	✓25 participants representing individual diversity in gender, age, culture, ethnicity ✓personal, site-based with varying examples of collective action
Dialogic validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• methods, evidence and findings reflect and resonate with a community of practice; peer review</li> </ul>	✓ Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Freire, 1986; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Lykes & Mallona, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; 2013; Swantz, 2013; Tolia-Kelly, 2010
Relational validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• authentic relationships maintained between participants and researcher and among themselves</li> </ul>	✓robust evidence of <i>communitas</i> and liminality within findings

### 3.5 Summary

Herr and Anderson (2015) claim that taking on a participatory action research dissertation can potentially make an important contribution to a field's knowledge base because it contains a local perspective that few other traditional researchers are able to provide. They further claim that:

A dissertation forces action researchers to think not only about what knowledge they have generated that can be fed back into the setting (local knowledge), but also what knowledge they have generated that is transferable to other settings (public knowledge).

(Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 11)

Participatory action research answers a call for creating conditions that promote democratic, collaborative, interpersonal relationships within a framework that aims to remove hierarchical and positional barriers to co-create new understandings and ways of being in the world. It involves "exploring tensions between complicity and consciousness, choice and constraint,

indifference and compassion, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 326).

This critical participatory action research study was situational and contextualized attending to creating and gathering evidence to help better understand the home-school interface through spatial and temporal boundaries. It was based in a local school district with 25 teachers and parents experiencing what happens when a discursive third space is created that nurtures relational reciprocal learning; and its impact on curriculum design and literacy pedagogy in classrooms. Critical participatory action research methodology provided a framework for designing a space that drew from the process of conscientization (Freire, 1976) fostering participants' abilities to share their stories, dialogue and problematize from and with each other's perspectives, critically reflect upon taken for granted practices, and take communicative action personally and collectively beyond the scope and limitations of the research.

Data collection methods included pre- and post-inquiry interviews, journal reflections, researcher and participant field notes, emails and final descriptive participant written contributions that contributed to a visual canvas. Constant comparative data analysis method was used over the course of nine months with the data sets that helped construct codes and develop theoretical categories that crystallized participants' experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Charmaz, 2014; Hallberg, 2006; Richards & Morse, 2013; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). "Crystallization through multiple refractions of perspectives captured through different modes and media, voices and representations over time" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) supported both inductive and deductive comparative data analysis processes.

Ultimately in the field of education, critical PAR should support people to make their practices more educational, rational and reasonable, productive and sustainable, more just, and

inclusive (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Credibility of conducting critical participatory action research in education is found within the living process of making change in how practice is conducted, not for the sake of change, but for the sake of education and the "double purpose of education: initiating people into the practices by which they will be able to live well in a world worth living in" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 113).

Kurt Lewin, often credited with the birth of action research, wrote that in order to truly understand a system takes a collective group enactment to first reveal the layers of complexity inherent in the system before effecting change upon it (Schein, 1996). Critical PAR using the process of conscientization within participatory research helped participants in this study to peel back layers of complexity, question habitual and socialized taken for granted elements to find agency in effecting change within their home-school interface lived experiences.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

What was previously taken for granted become, instead, contested sites of possibilities (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 158).

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) posit that "events under study are in temporal transition" (p. 479), especially when research is emergent and alive capturing organic process in the making rather than describing a static product or outcome. Directing attention temporally points inquirers toward the past, present and future of people, places, things and events under study, therefore the findings of this research story will be organized and represented chronologically in phases (Biklen, & Casella, 2007) to reflect the temporality of the five month critical participatory action research process. Findings that reflect the beginning or first phase of the research process will use pre-inquiry interviews as data while the middle or second phase will draw from post-inquiry interviews, research gathering field notes, a visual artifact and participant journal reflections. Findings from phase three will draw upon all pre- and post-research study data including post-interviews, research gathering field notes, school visit field notes, a visual co-created artifact and participant journal reflections. Finally, phase four will describe the impact of the research experience on participants as they move forward drawing from the same data collection as well as field notes from two participant presentations and post-inquiry participant communication.

As well as being organized chronologically in phases, the research narrative will be illustrated through metaphors that have been derived inductively and deductively from a constant comparative data analysis procedure within a critical participatory action research methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Hallberg, 2006). Within this inquiry's socially constructed dialogic space the voices and presence of all participants were allowed to surface and contribute

to the dialogue and knowledge creation (B. L. Hall, 1992; Kemmis, 2013; Kemmis et al., 2014).

The participatory methods in this inquiry led to negotiated meanings generated together that evolved into a hybrid Discourse (Gee, 1996, 2004, 2015) reflected in the collected data. Data has been inductively and deductively read and reread from which categories, themes and metaphors have surfaced. The metaphors representing the constituent phases of the research process have surfaced from the voices of the participants from pre- and post-interviews, research gathering field notes, and reflection journals. Out of the "wearying mass of ethnographic data" the metaphoric language quickly caught my attention as MacLure (2010) describes "as a kind of *glow . . . glimmer...capturing my gaze making [me] pause to burrow inside it, mining it for meaning*" (p. 282, original emphasis). The metaphors called out to help story-tell and give this findings chapter form, shape and movement as representations of the participatory research process. Much like Brahms (2008) discovered in her participatory research, metaphors emerged through a dialogic process among participants assisting them to become more cohesive and productive while bridging socio-cultural diversities. As Brahms (2008) articulates: "First, we create the conditions, then we must listen for the metaphors to speak" (p. 99). The metaphors that spoke through the voices of the participants have given shape and form to this findings chapter.

The first phase of the research process is titled "Doors" and represents the historically and socially defined home –school interface described by participants based on their lived experiences prior to entering into the critical participatory action research process. The second phase "Tapestry," represents the co-created discursive third space inhabited and described by the participants over the course of the participatory action research process. The third phase, "Bridges," describes the transformational space left behind by the participants as they transitioned away from each other and from the research process. The final phase, or epilogue,

"Ripples," describes how the participants portrayed their transition beyond the research space tasked with reframing and reconstructing their roles, identities and social practices as they took ownership of making their own histories (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

### **Phase One: Doors**

The thing about doors  
is  
they can be completely in the way  
or  
sometimes simply a way in.

-Mercie B.

Doors are structural and architectural. Doors can also be abstract and symbolic. They can symbolize openings into new spaces or they can represent barriers and boundaries that prevent entry. Doors can sit open as a welcoming gesture or can be closed and even locked to signify a barrier. A door's stance can indicate inclusion or exclusion because doors both separate and connect; they signify passage and transition; entrances and exits; beginnings and endings. Doors take up a meaning to those who encounter them.

#### **4.1 Doors: Policies and Practices**

Initial inductive and deductive data analysis of the participants' transcribed pre-inquiry interviews occurred in the third month of the research process. What quickly became apparent in both parent and teacher interviews was the use of the word "door." Nine out of fourteen teachers specifically used the phrase "open door policy" or "door" to describe how organizationally systems and expectations were in place for parent and family interaction within their home–school interface. During the pre-inquiry interviews, teacher participant's use of the term "open door policy" made reference to the opportunities available for parents and families to either communicate with teachers or enter into the classroom or school as volunteers or visitors.

T1: A lot of the conversations I have with parents is at the door—picking kids up as they are younger students . . . My hope is that the school's policies are an open door policy just like I believe in.

T2: I know we have an open door policy. Families are welcome to come in and if they want to come in the classroom that's welcoming as long as it's ok by you. It's not an open revolving door.

Kim: Always welcoming them [parents] into the classroom, always telling them that it's an open door policy, that they can come in. I mean I don't want them coming in all the time, but they're certainly welcome before school and that the lines of communication are always open.

T6: Be able to always have open door policies for them to come in if they're curious about what is happening in their child's classroom.

T7: Family centered practice starts with an open-door policy. I try to keep the classroom door open and very welcoming. I encourage them to come in and stop by and just ask questions with me on a daily basis. It's you know, please stop by if you have any questions, my door is open.

T11: I have an open door policy, so I want parents to be involved. I encourage them to come in and see what we're doing and not just to photocopy for me and cut and paste.

Six out of eleven parents also described the physical interface between home and school either using the term "door" or by referencing morning or afterschool opportunities to make connections with teachers or other school personnel beyond the closed classroom door.

P6: She always calls us over to the door at the end of the day if she has something, which is nice. I think it [home-school connection] primarily in terms of door chats, the 5

minutes you get with the teacher. It's not much, but if that's what you have, you're going to have to take it!

P10: In kindergarten the parents still come to pick up their kids so we all end up just chatting at the door.

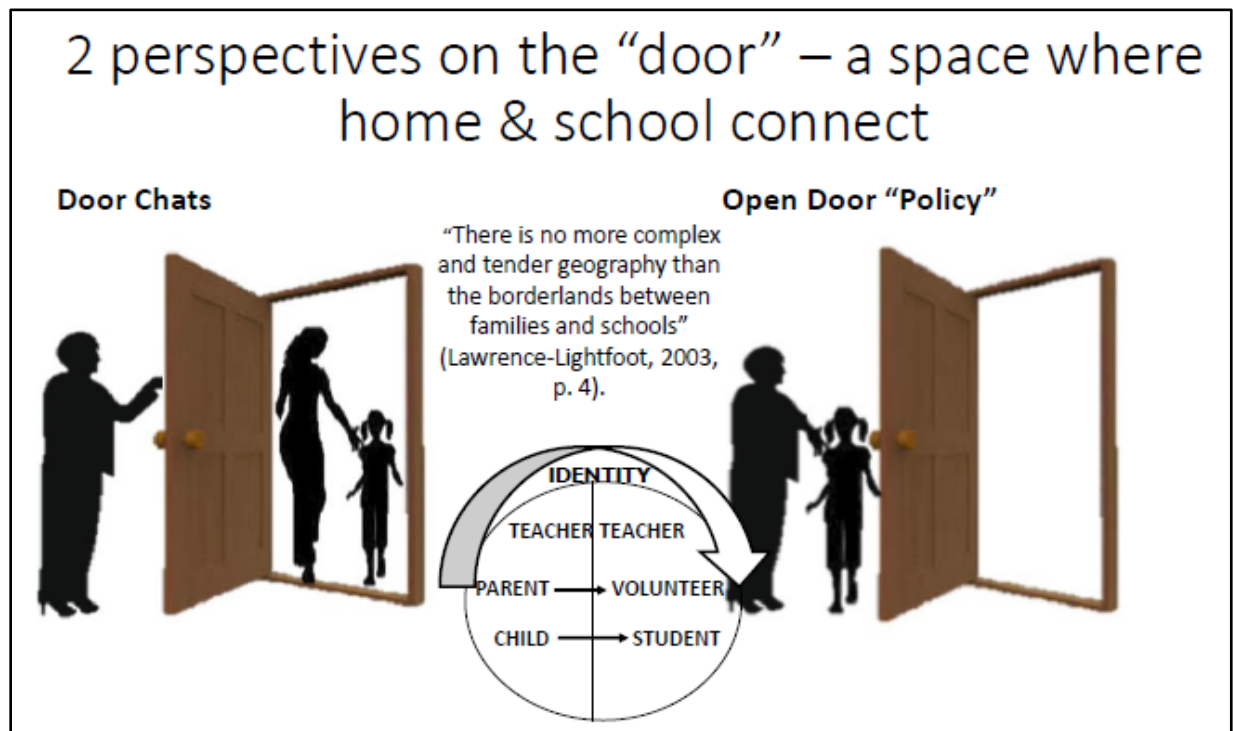
P11: The principal, office staff and teachers have been open and easy with us. It's an open door policy.

The door figures prominently in the pre-interview data with both parent and teacher participants. It is used to describe an entrance or a way into the physical school, a point of departure for parents to take leave of their children - both a dropping off and picking up space, as well as an informal communicative space for interaction to happen between parents and teachers. The use of the word policy suggests that the passageway into the school is also a space that is defined by procedures, indicating a more formalized rule-bound system that is instituted by either individual teachers or the school in general to give parents and families guidelines around using the door. Schools, as power-filled spaces, unconsciously shape and define for children and parents how to belong or not belong in a space, often not questioning the values and assumptions that define their Discourse that shapes its space.

Pre-interview data was analyzed in April and May, 2017 after four research gathering meetings. Use of the word “door” by fifteen participants very quickly became an obvious and prominent theme. Herr and Anderson (2015) describe how participants in a participatory action research study are often invited to reflect on data analysis during some phases of the process as a means to include their voices and thinking through the feedback cycles of action and reflection. To help make sense of the theme, I created an image depicting what I had interpreted from the initial inductive analysis of the pre-inquiry interviews. At the final research gathering in June,

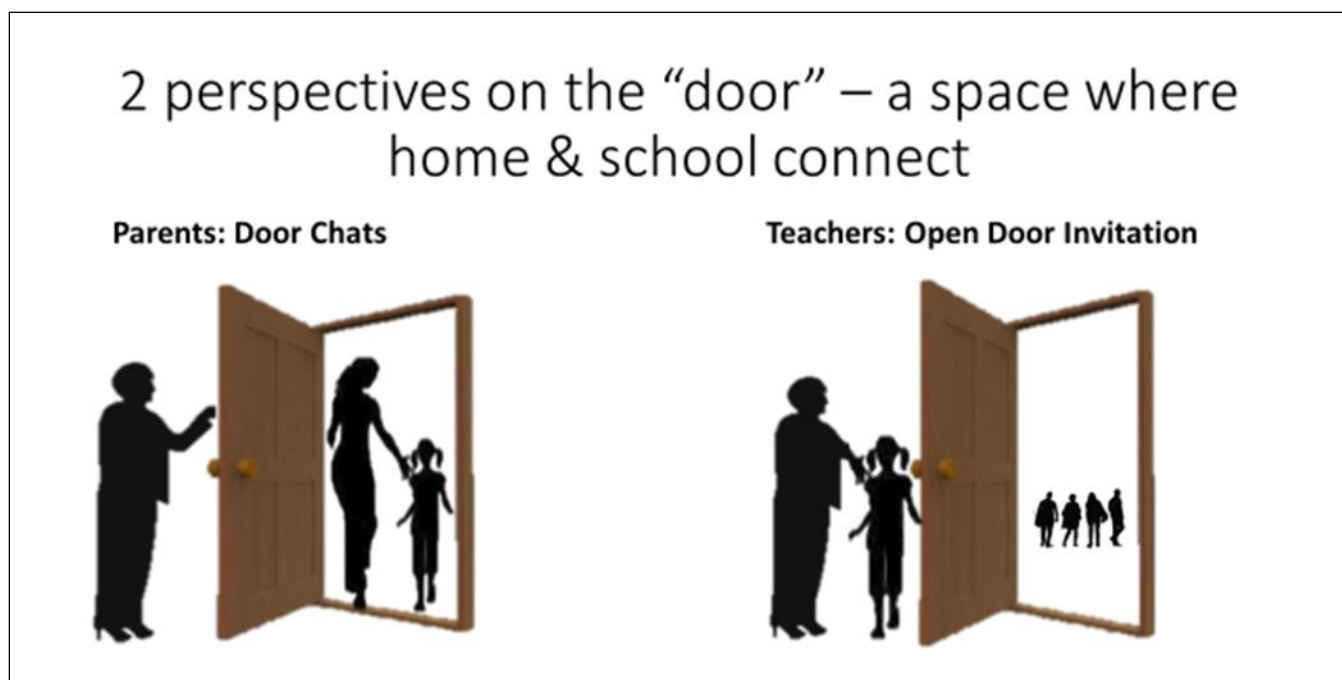


2017, the participants were invited to problematize, reflect and dialogue together on the image (Figure 2) created to represent the door theme from their pre-interviews.



*Figure 2.* Pre-interview data interpretation of the reoccurring use of the word door.

Participants were invited to record their impressions and thoughts and collective reflections together in small dialogue groups about the significance of the door as represented in Figure 2. Two big ideas were surfaced by the small groups and shared with the whole group: (a) Change the word "policy" to "invitation"; and (b) "With the open door 'policy' picture, where is the parent?" Discussion among the whole group followed: "Parents could be in the picture—make them small in the background—they are still there" (Field Notes, June 14, 2017). Participants tuned into the word "policy" and discussed how changing it to the word "invitation" creates a different tone and message. As a result of this analysis by the participants, the image (Figure 3) is revised to include parents in both door frames and the word policy is exchanged with invitation.



*Figure 3.* Revised door representation based on participant analysis and feedback.

Several lingering questions based on Figure 2 were also recorded in the small dialogue groups by participants to help feed the process of conscientization inherent within the critical participatory action research process.

- Is every door open?
- Are we making the assumption that all teachers want to invite people in?
- How do we create windows or tunnels instead of just doors?
- Identity interrupted—breaking open current borders/barriers—Removing the door?!?

(Participant and Researcher Field Notes, June 14, 2017)

This illustrative example of bringing early data analysis to the participants as part of the action-reflection participatory process highlights how at this point in the research process, they were comfortable with questioning their perspectives in the four-month old data and reflecting upon what it represented about the home-school interface prior to their coming together as a research group. The word policy was no longer representative of what an open door to

classrooms meant. Participants agreed that the word invitation was less prescriptive and more relational. Parents originally were not visually included in the first "open door policy" image. The feedback to me was that parents should be visually located beyond the open door as figures representing their presence at a distance. Participants agreed that the second image better represented their collective understandings at that point in time.

## **4.2 Roles and Expectations within the Interface**

Physically, doors act as passageways into the school and are locations of transitional spaces. In this space children take leave of their home lifeworld and transition into their school lifeworld where they take on the identity of 'student'. School personnel are there to receive them in the morning and at the end of the school day they transition back into their home lifeworld as "children." However, symbolically and metaphorically the door can also be viewed as a boundary or border that not only separates home and school, but determines how one should interface with the other. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) further illustrates this metaphor as "the terrain between families and schools defined by boundary lines that are both psychological and metaphoric, intangible and rooted in emotional content" (p. 50).

A second theme derived through data analysis of the participant pre-inquiry interviews is one where participants described their roles and what was expected of those roles within the home-school interface. Teachers, parents, children or students, and administrators all step into their historically and socially constructed roles given cloaks of identity as they transition onto the landscape of school. Their language, ways of positioning each other, rules of engagement and expectations placed on each other's role are adopted and lived through their experienced stories of school. Participant data revealed how participants defined their identities and roles within the

home school interface and what rules of engagement guided their ways of interacting with each other.

T5 recalls the language of policy imposed upon her developing institutional identity (Gee, 2004) as a young teacher:

I have been spoken to from one or two administrators about getting too close with families. Oh you shouldn't get too close and there needs to be a separation between home and school and you're not their friend you're their teacher.

T9 described an assumed school policy that influenced her practice about interacting with parents: "I know it's [school policy on communicating with parents] encouraged to phone or email and make appointments with teachers, not just show up when you want to talk about something specific." T6 cited school policy about sending communication home to families: "School newsletters, if we wanted to send home any information it has to go through administration for approval." T6 also explained the policy for how many times teachers are required to interact with parents: "We have mandatory two parent conferences a year and report cards." Kim shared the policy of communication when concerns arise: "I think a general accepted policy is that if the parents talk to the teacher first or they talk to administration or go up to the school board, it doesn't always happen that way, but it's just basic ethics." T5 also recalled a policy about connecting with families early in the school year: "There was a policy that we had to somehow connect with every family either face to face or call them...by the end of the second week of school."

Despite nine teacher participants making reference to an open door policy, nine teacher participants also reported that they were not familiar with what - if any system or school policies informed their practices and expectations of how to interface with homes and families. T3, as an

example, stated: "I'm not sure that I know [policy]. I'm not sure that I know the boundaries and I sometimes question the boundaries myself." T8 also indicated: "I wouldn't say there's any set policy. I wouldn't know the policies really." Regardless of using policy as part of their Discourse when speaking of how they interact with parents and families, teacher participants appeared to unconsciously be assuming their place within the institution's hierarchical structure enacting their role regarding setting and following policy. Membership in a pre-established and unquestioned Discourse community "erects and maintains institutions and affects an individual's identity...and positions relationships between people and groups of people thus helping to sustain and reproduce the status quo" (Nakagawa, 2000, pp. 446-447).

All eleven parents interviewed were able to describe their perceptions of what was expected of them in their role within the home-school interface. P6 described the parent role as: "To supplement [what's going on in the classroom]. Help out with anything he needs more work on, extra time." P8 agreed: "Our job is to support what's going on in the classroom, as parents." Similarly, in their pre-inquiry interviews, Gwen, Maleeka, P4, P5, and P11 all clearly articulated their assumed roles and identities within the home-school interface:

Gwen: Back up for the teacher—supporting the teacher is key to supporting our child at school...Families have to back up teachers.

Maleeka: My role is to work with her at home. I like to hear from the teacher always...to work with my daughter with her homework, help her at home so she can be present in the classroom....Follow up with the teachers so she is not behind.

P4: My role is to sort of accompany and sort of be an accompaniment to his learning.

Whatever he's learning at school, just to reinforce that at home. So when his teacher sends home reading assignments and there's the home reading program that we're going

through right now, just to make sure that we're participating in that and help his learning with doing additional reading, and teaching and instruction at home . . . ultimately it's my job to check on him and make sure that he's doing ok.

P5: I see myself as an advocate for her to make sure she's getting what she should get out of school and an at home support system, so helping her with her reading. Anything the teacher needs, we're happy to try and work it out.

P11: The parent's role is to be involved and know what is going on from the school and classroom's perspective. By keeping informed and knowing what is going on [in the classroom] I can have conversations with my boys that are more informed beyond how was school today. I know what to ask them.

Suissa (2006, 2009) posits that parents develop conceptions of their roles within the home-school interface as a result of the Discourse in which teachers become members, and how expectations are articulated from school to home. This Discourse influences how some parents believe they also have to be educational or pedagogic at home with their children. P10 shared a similar conception of the parent's role and also contributed her belief that it is up to the school to also educate parents on how to be teachers at home to further support their children's school learning:

P10: It's not enough to just send things home for the child and say, 'do this.' Setting up parent info sessions or sending home info for parents to say: 'These are best practices when you are reading with your child, ask these types of questions or try to make these type of connections.' So that parents know how because it does not always come naturally for some parents how to educate their kids.

P10 echoes Ramaekers and Suissa's (2011) claim that educators place expectations on parents to do things with their children that are specifically school goal-oriented compared to their ordinary and daily familial interactions with their children.

P10: When the teacher sends things home I can follow through on that. It's a way for the child to continue that learning past the school hours in the evening. I think their role is to help support the parents in best practices and showing them how to connect with their child's education. I think just showing us how to do that at home is just as important as doing it at school and being able to share what they have been doing at school.

T11, T2, and T12 in their pre-inquiry interviews articulated what expectations they place on parents and families to reinforce and extend school learning at home:

T11: They need to be interested in their child. In coming to student-led conferences. I believe a parent or guardian or grandparent needs to be involved. It's not stick them in front of a computer and they can play a game online—which they can do but maybe a game they can play together. I also suggested to parents read to your children. There's been such a wall up...I mean, so many parents don't know what's going on at school and I want them to be part of it because when they are part of what I am doing, and even having conversations with their children or reading to their child. It makes my job easier but it makes a collective instead of him or her against me. You know, we're not opposites. I wish parents and families respected what went on in the classroom.

T2: Home reading and practicing word families. Talking to them about what they're learning and pulling that information out of them because typically kids say I don't know. Coming in and volunteering and role model a respect for the education and for the

teacher....I wish parents and families all valued education and learning and understood its importance and the importance of talking about it.

T12: I think that the best thing that a family can do for your child in school is just have a positive attitude towards school and a willingness to engage their students in the material that's being covered. They have to offer support and encouragement....I wish parents and families would take a more active interest in their child's education.

Brien and Stelmach (2009) suggest that the role of teacher has become increasingly defined by statutory and regulatory requirements positioning them more as agents of the state rather than in traditional 'in loco parentis' role. Therefore, much of what has been accepted as parent involvement in their child's school experience is based on school-centric (Pushor, 2017) practices that determine what that involvement should look like. Teachers prescribe, orchestrate, and expect parents to participate in schools through structural approaches such as homework completion, parent-teacher conferences or acting as volunteers in the school and classroom (Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Lawson, 2003).

T8 confirmed this role: "The teacher's role is to make sure they're involved; that they know they feel welcome when they come into the class." Kim explained that her role is to keep parents abreast of their children's progress on an ongoing basis to eliminate any surprises when formal reports are sent home:

My role is to make sure that families are informed and that they have opportunities to be involved as much as possible. I think that's one of my big roles is to make sure that they are informed so that they aren't blindsided by the report card three times a year or the sudden phone call because behavior has been an issue.



T12 took it a step further. He believed his role was to both engage parents in what children learn in the classroom, as well as work on improving the relational aspect of their engagement with the school:

Making sure that parents have an understanding of what's going on in the classroom, the concepts you're covering and making sure they feel welcome in the school. I have come across parents who have a negative outlook of school and just trying to reframe that . . . so that their experiences are not impacting their child's experience of school.

Participants in their pre-inquiry interviews articulated and reinforced how pre-determined roles, responsibilities and cloaks of identities exist on either side of the metaphorical door within the home-school interface. Teachers are inducted into the profession, apprenticed into the Discourse of policies and become members of a historically dominant institutional Discourse that defines who they are and how they live out their roles within the school landscape. This larger Discourse deeply influences decisions that both parents and teachers make about parent involvement and the possibilities that can be imagined for how families and schools should interact. The language used to discuss parents in relation to schools controls how parents get involved and creates representations of the ideal parent. Nakagawa (2000) argues that embedded within the dominant institutional power structure lives a specific parent involvement Discourse that provides members with a particular way of thinking and talking about how parents should interact with the school thus creating certain representations of the roles they must assume. The expectations and perceptions about parent roles are constructed by the language of policies that guide parent involvement found in ministry of education, school district and school documents dictating what parents should do and who they should be (Nakagawa, 2000). Interestingly, teacher participants in their pre-inquiry interviews used policy-driven language to describe how

they had come to understand home-school interactions, yet could not specify exactly where these policies actually exist.

Teacher participants in this inquiry, guided by policies both overt and assumed, enacted their roles as teachers by placing unquestioned expectations on parents within their home-school interface. Brien and Stelmach (2009) posit: "Parents typically comply with teachers as gatekeepers of curriculum and school matters" (p. 8). For these parent participants, agreeing to participate in a research study with teachers suggests they already had a measure of comfort in their assumed roles within the home-school interface and appeared to live these roles with unquestioning confidence, acceptance and ease.

#### **4.3 Structural Events, Activities and Rules of Engagement**

A third robust theme that surfaced from data analysis of the pre-inquiry interviews describes the school organized structural activities and events that require parents and families to come to school and interact with their children's teachers (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Along with prescribing roles and identities, there are certain ritualized and institutionalized events, occasions and activities when teachers and parents are expected to either come together on the school landscape or engage in communication with each other. Structural approaches are taken for granted institutionalized activities that are embedded in the very fabric of the way schools operate. They include parent-teacher conferences or meetings, volunteer opportunities to support school and classroom activities, fund-raising projects, open-houses, concerts, curriculum information sessions, and family literacy events. They also include methods of communicating (newsletters, emails, websites, texts, phone messages, letters, notes) from school to home that typically report progress, relay concerns or issues, or request parent approval or parent participation in some form.

In their pre-inquiry interviews, all teacher participants described structural opportunities that allow parents and families to come into school over the course of the year. They also described structural methods that afforded them opportunities to keep the lines of communication open from school to home:

T2: Conferences, parent teacher conferences, conversations in the hall outside before during after school. We have an open house first week of school where parents are welcome to come. I got two this year out of 24.

T9: We have a school barbecue, the PAC puts on at the beginning of the year and a lot of parents show up. Parent teacher interviews. In the school newsletters we let them know when there's cultural performances and if we have special events in the classroom. So there's lots of opportunities for parents to come in.

T8: Newsletters, being a kindergarten teacher is kind of great because you get to see the kids getting picked up by their parents. So if they have any connection that way or questions they always come talk to me in that sense and newsletters, emails. Send that little questionnaire home and tell me about your kid.

Kim: I email parents once a week with all the class updates and things that we're doing or field trips or information that needs to be disseminated that may not actually get home through the student.

T6: At parent-teacher conferences, at IEP meetings. In a kindergarten context, parents with drop off in the morning and pick up in the afternoon. After school activities like family barbecue night, dad's pumpkin carving, Mother's Day tea, pancake breakfasts.

T9 and T11 both also shared that communication from school to home was about setting up expectations for parents to support their children in their school work at home:

T9: Parents should understand the reasoning why we send things home for them to reinforce with their children. Following up if there's home reading, reading with your child, doing flashcards with their children.

T11: Well, talk to them about the day. I sent home a schedule and it's not that we follow the schedule, but sort of look and say, "What did you do in writing today or what are you working on in reading?" Sometimes in the planner, I'll put down new words of the day or we're having a valentine's breakfast on Tuesday or I'll put prompting questions so that parents can see. Then when the parents see that in their planner, the parents can say.....oh you're learning about.

Structural events and methods of communication that invite parent and family interaction with schools and teachers are typically imprinted upon all who have passed through the doors of school as children or as parents themselves. Society has come to expect these as rituals that belong to the way schools function and the way that teachers and parents ought to interact with each other. Nakagawa (2000) reminds us that institutional Discourse is powerful because it shapes the architecture of relationships and individual identities within those same institutions. Just as roles have been prescribed for teachers and parents by the historically and socially defined institutional Discourse, so have the events and procedures been similarly inscribed in the way business is conducted with the home-school interface.

Parent participants in their pre-inquiry interviews also provided many examples of how they had experienced structural opportunities that allowed them to connect and communicate with teachers about their children and their progress at school:

P8: I went to parent- teacher interviews and was shocked with how well our son was doing with everything in class.

Gwen: The basic way I communicate with the school is via e-mail. Some of the other ways we connect is through Christmas concerts, student-led conferences, myself by volunteering. I volunteer in the school making popcorn and [helping with] crossing guards, helping out with staff luncheon.

P11: Teachers getting information to us in any form about what the kids are learning through email, papers coming home, or websites.

P6: I went to parent-teacher. We get a monthly newsletter with what they're working on and stuff like that in the classroom. We offer our time, we volunteer in a class. We read with kids. They read to us.

P5: I've gone in to volunteer and I'd like to do more of that, but I don't have childcare. I do send the occasional email and parent teacher interviews.

P4: I feel welcomed into the classroom and if I want to help with hot lunch or whatever I feel like I'm needed or appreciated.

The roles of parents and the home have been institutionalized through history and an established social order that defines home-school interactions legitimized through bureaucratic structures, policies and practices (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Policies, whether written or assumed as part of the way things are done become the political and institutional capital by which roles and rules of engagement are determined and lived out through membership in the institution's Discourse community. Structural approaches to the home-school interface are normative practices that have been engrained in the fabric of school life, both ritualized and institutionalized and used as benchmarks for determining what good parent involvement means (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Feiler, 2010; O'Connor, 2001). Along with readily assuming their roles as supporters of teachers and school with their children at home, the parent participants in

this inquiry also shared how they actively and willingly engaged in structural events and activities that schools planned, organized and provided for them.

#### **4.4 Reciprocal Concerns for Children's Development at School and at Home**

A fourth theme that became evident through ongoing inductive and deductive analysis was that of concern for the child by parents when they transitioned into the school world and concern for the child by teachers when they transitioned back into their life and home world.

Ten of the parent participants stressed their concern for their children's emotional and social health, safety and wellbeing behind the doors of the school:

P1: Treating them like their own family, they're like their own child. I know sometimes it's very difficult, there's so many kids. This is what you expect, the teacher to be there for the child when you need not just in academic, the psychological support, the emotional support.

Gwen: I believe it [school] needs to be a safe place for kids to learn, to be free, to be themselves.

Maleeka: Her social is my concern. I want her to be always very respectful. I want her to be a leader, not a follower....Good memories, happy memories. I don't want her to hate school or to have bad experience at school.

P4: I want him to remember having positive relationships with his teachers and just school being a safe place for him. I want him to remember making good friendships and enjoying learning. I want him to remember to just be a place that he wants to go to versus a place he has to go to.

P7: I hope that my children will have memories –happy memories of school where it was learning, where they were challenged, where they felt their parents were involved and that we helped in guiding them and being a team, a team player with their teachers.

P9: More positive success . . . to try and create success. Taking them up but not breaking them. Getting full potential of herself.

P10: I hope it's a place where they feel supported . . . . A place where they are able to build confidence and a place where they feel like they are able to sense community. A supportive community.

While parent participants expressed the most concern for their children's emotional and social development and safety at school, teacher participants expressed their concern with how school learning was being reinforced and valued behind the doors of the child's home. Twelve teacher participants spoke of their hope that connections about what was being taught and learned at school was also happening at home between parents and their children. Some spoke specifically about extending and practicing school literacy skills at home, while others spoke generally of a need for parents just to stay connected with their children and reinforce that what was being taught and learned at school was also valued and even continued to be taught and practiced at home.

T1: How to help their kids at home with their reading and their writing and I'm not just here to teach their kids at school, but if I 'm not there at home how can I best set up that environment so they are learning as much as possible all the time.

T5: Showing value in school. Or valuing learning and giving the child as many experiences as they can. Whether it's conversational and reading through books or

whether it's going for a walk outside around the block or whether it's going on trips—it's that kind of support.

T12: It's really important because in the early stages of learning to read having practice at home is important and having the enthusiasm towards reading for student is really important. Just having parents read with their kids is got to be one of the most beneficial things for an early literacy learner. Just really encouraging that and rewarding it. I wish parents and families would take a more active interest in their child's education.

Kim: I wish parents and families were more involved in their child's education. Just checking in from time to time; checking in with me, but checking in with the child, as well.

T7: I think just to engage and bring their knowledge what they're learning in school and make those connections. I think parents should be connecting what they know to what their child is learning and just to kind of make it cohesive.

T10: I wish parents and families were more present . . . that has really deteriorated people connecting with their kids. I just wish that families and parents were more connected with their kids and more connected with each other.

TC2: Hopefully they're talking with their kids about what's happening at school to learn more about what they're doing and to help them maybe have a positive outlook on school and what they're doing there.

It is evident that twenty-two participants in the pre-inquiry interviews explicitly expressed care and concern for the child from a perspective that reflected their role in that child's life. Parents emphasized care and concern regarding their children's social, emotional health and



physical safety. Teachers, on the other hand, expressed more care and concern about how the child's academic school learning was being valued and reinforced in the home.

#### **4.5 Desire for Relational Connections within the Home-School Interface**

A fifth prominent theme derived from the pre-inquiry interviews focused on participants' interest and desire for engaging in more personal relationships within the home-school interface. Nine out of the fourteen teacher and teacher candidate participants in their pre-inquiry interviews mentioned the importance of connecting with parents and families beyond the traditional structural means towards a more relational partnership. T10 describes her desire to build a team with the parents of the children in her class:

We need to work as a team. In that first parent teacher interview, is that we're going to be working as a team together and we're going to be communicating with each other and it's going to be a two-way communication if there's things you need from us please let us know. And from us to you, we'll let you know.

The home-school interface can be a space defined by power boundaries of exclusivity and marginalization or a relational space where educators share an empathetic relation with families and their children, "gaining access to their hopes as well as their habits of nurture" (Grumet, 1988, p. 179). T10's quote suggests that despite the structural practices embedded in the historical and dominant school Discourse, there is also space and time for home and school to connect in a much more relationship oriented manner. T5 also agrees: "I want them to get to know me and I want them to feel invited and part of the learning that's happening in the classroom."

Relational approaches, according to Kim and Sheridan, (2015) focus on interpersonal relationships that acknowledge the significance of shared roles and responsibilities among

families and schools which rely on mutual cooperation, coordination and collaboration to enhance the educational experience for children across social, emotional, behavioral and academic domains. Constructive relationships among home-school partners provide opportunities for dialogue and problem solving, one that is not present when home and school systems operate in isolation from or counter to one another (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). T10 and T1 both elaborated further on this notion of coming together and connecting on more of a relatable human level:

T10: Letting our parents know and our families know that there's more to us than just teachers. That we're moms and we have families of our own, we have children. Once they see that we've been on the other side of the table—it's very important for families and parents to know that we're parents as well.

T1: I'm pretty easy going and I like to talk to parents about not just specific school things so that they do feel comfortable opening up so I talk about my family and my kids and I try to relate my struggles to them as well because I know what it's like to be a parent with ups and downs and even though my kids are little I think I can still relate to those kinds of things and be as human as possible.

T6 described hope for and importance in creating safety and trust in a two-way relationship between home and school:

I just wish parents and families would try and make that connection. It's a two-way street but I wish that they could find the strength within them to be able to maybe move past some of their fears, for those parents that are having a hard time getting in the door. I wish parents and families would take time to get to know that teacher as well. I know it's

a two-way street, and that we have to outreach and be warm and welcoming to these families, as well for them to get into this place.

T2 and Kim also expressed interest in expanding and perhaps softening the barrier between home and school to foster more of a relational interface of connectedness and safety for both:

T2: I would like it to mean that it's more in-depth, not conversation, but relationship where it's safe to discuss things and ask questions. Both ways—for me to ask questions, then to ask questions and feel comfortable being honest. On their part safe to ask me questions and not to think it's a silly question or that I really don't care or that they're not valued. I want them to know that I value them and their input. And safe on my part to ask them questions that I'm not going to offend them and that they'll be honest.

Kim: I don't want parents to feel they can't discuss with me if there are issues, and I don't want to feel that I can't talk to parents if there are issues. So establishing a connection from the start sort of helps that. I think we need to work together ultimately education of the child has to be a package deal. It can't be separate from home and I think that finding ways to deepen those connections and develop those—especially with parents that are harder to connect with—for whatever reasons—it can be work related that they can't make it to school or their home experience wasn't positive so that's what they perceive this school experience is going to be—they don't trust teachers and they don't trust schools.

T3, T6, and T1 all spoke of the need and purpose for connecting relationally with parents and families beyond the institutionalized structural ways of interacting. However, these teacher participants also took ownership in initiating these kinds of relationships:

T3: I think that it needs to be connected. So home and school need to be one because what they bring to us every day it stems from home. Who they are and what they know is based on the knowledge that they've generated since day one. For me to not honor that or look at that, I think would be a shame to the learning that we do every day. I think that there always needs to be that open communication piece and I think that starts almost with me and I need to make sure in September that I ensure that parents feel comfortable coming into this space and this is their space as much as it is mine and the students because I want them to feel like they can fluidly move within the classroom and their homes as a place for their children to be and learn.

T6: We have to be the first to invite because we don't know families in the situation where they're coming from. With the teacher, the school is their comfortable zone- it's our role to be inviting and creating opportunities for families to be engaging in their children's learning.

T1: It takes two to tango—parents have to want to be engaged but it's the teacher's role to get the ball rolling. If I don't make the first step then parents are not going to reach out to me. There might be the unique situation when a parent is really confident and approach me first, but generally I have to be the one to reach out first. My role is to start first and help them feel comfortable and get that ball rolling.

Only 4 out of eleven parent participants also referred to the importance of going beyond the institutionalized structural opportunities to connect at a deeper level with their child's teacher. Maleeka simply said: "I feel like it should be a good relationship, so we can work together and help my daughter." P1 and P7 referenced other reasons for seeking a more personal relationship with their child's teachers:

P1: I treat the teacher like their parent. I explain this to my kids that in the school it's just like your parents. Respect them, love them and trust them. I really feel lost if I don't have that connection with the teacher because I feel that we both have to work as a unit for the better and the best of the [up]bringing of the kids. For me it's not just the kids' academic, it's the whole personality. If me and the teacher don't understand the child, it will be very difficult for us to work together. For me, it's very important, the connection of the teacher and the parent.

P7: I feel that the teacher and the parents need to work closely together. They may teach the education component or the academic component, as well as they'll teach some life lessons, but we're here as the parent to reinforce what those lessons are taught. We're a team together. So the teacher's role along with the parent's role is connecting together to expand and help our children to explore the world around and to grasp the concepts, not just the societal norms or what society is projecting on us, but teaching what is . . . broadening their learning, by working together. It also shows that we're a team and that we're not pegging each other against each other.

What is interesting about this theme around creating relational connections within the home-school interface is that twice as many teacher participants than parent participants in their pre-inquiry interviews mentioned their interest and understanding of its significance. This suggests that the teachers who agreed to be participants in the research project were already predisposed and comfortable with entering into a situation where they would be required to get to know their research partner on a more personal level. Parent participants, on the other hand, in their pre-inquiry interview, although interested in participating in the research study, were not

yet speaking of a relationship with their child's teacher as anything more than formal and within the boundaries of structural opportunities designed by the school for them.

#### **4.6 Doors: In the Way or Simply a Way in?**

Findings from phase 1 of this research study reveal a glimpse into the thoughts, beliefs, practices, identities and lived experiences of the twenty-five research participants prior to them engaging in the critical participatory action research process. Their contributions through the pre-inquiry interviews gives the study a pre-existing foundation as well as an entrance or doorway into the next phase of the research study. Prior to coming together as a research community, participants lived their roles as teachers and parents according to the ways embedded in their respective worlds typically without questioning the taken-for-granted practices, perspectives, and Discourses inherent in their life and school worlds. It is important to note that these participants willingly accepted the invitation to participate in a participatory study that examined home-school connections. Their willingness to participate suggested a measure of comfort in their respective roles and identities as previously lived within the home-school interface. It also suggests a level of confidence to be placed in a vulnerable and unpredictable position not normally encountered in the home-school interface.

Based on analysis of their pre-inquiry interviews and illustrated metaphorically by “Door,” five themes emerge from the first phase of the research study:

1. Policies and practices that inform the norms of the home-school interface.
2. Roles, expectations and identities within the home-school interface.
3. Structural approaches for connections within the home-school interface.
4. Reciprocal concerns for children's development at school and at home.
5. Desire for relational connections within the home-school interface.

The door as a metaphor for phase one of this research study demonstrates to us that it can represent either barriers that challenge the home-school interface or access points that open up the way into a productive and meaningful home-school interface. Doors as metaphoric barriers have been historically constructed by school norms and positionally-powered Discourses (Gee, 1996, 2015; Giroux, 1996; Nakagawa, 2000), resulting in hierarchical relationships between home and school that have not changed much since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Baskwill, 2013; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Constantino, 2005; Edwards et al., 1999; Keyser, 2006; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Lopez & Stoelting, 2010; Pushor, 2007; Ridnour, 2011; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Doors, as barriers, represent the status quo. Doors, as openings, represent challenging that same status quo.

Upon entering the teaching profession, teachers and administrators become inducted into a preexisting institutional hierarchical power structure. They assume the hegemonic powers and Discourse that accompany their positions within the structure and architecture of the institution. Discourses according to Gee's definition (1996, 2004, 2015) (with a capital D) are the identity kits that give membership to a group where people share everyday theories of the world to inform how they talk, think, act and behave (Gee, 1996, 2004, 2015; Mackay, 2003). Parents and families also bring with them primary Discourse membership that either aligns or clashes with the dominant Discourse inherent within the school landscape. In the case of this research study, parent participants were accustomed to aligning with the expectations that school has placed on them. They had mostly lived out their roles successfully within the home-school interface and brought with them the social and cultural capital to enter into the research space with confidence.

Since schools historically have operated within a white middle class cultural norm, inequalities between teachers and parents have gone unnoticed and these power relationships are

hidden in the way schools function and interface with families, as well as in the pre-determined Discourse and roles assumed by teachers and parents (Giroux, 1996; Graue & Hawkins, 2010; Lareau, 1996). These normative realities lay out a blueprint for policies, roles, practices, communication, expectations and ultimately what is lived and experienced at the doors of the school between teachers and families.

Pushor (2007) describes this phenomena as the taken-for-granted operating structure of schools which privileges the educator as the expert possessing a body of professional knowledge that positions them and the school in a hierarchical place, of which home and parents are secondary. This position is further articulated by Cairney-Munsie (1992):

Because the school is still setting the agenda and determining what roles parents are to play within that agenda, the hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interests of the less-knowing parents, is maintained. With parent involvement, the focus is placed on what parents can do to help the school realize its intentioned outcomes for children, not on what the parents' hopes, dreams or intentions for their children may be or on what the school can do to help parents realize their personal or family agendas. The viewpoint seems to be one of 'seek[ing] to determine what parents can do for teachers, rather than what schools can do for families.' (p. 5)

Analysis from the pre-inquiry interviews reinforces Cairney-Munsie's (1992) notion on how roles, expectations and identities are politicized, ritualized, socialized and institutionalized with the home-school interface. The teacher and parent participants entered into this critical participatory action research process with well-established conceptions of who they are and how they ought to live with each other within their respective roles in the home-school interface. This is the foundation from which the next phase emerges.



## **Phase Two: Tapestry**

"Not museum pieces, but a tapestry." (Participant Field Notes, May 17, 2017)

I don't want parents waiting outside like 'museum pieces' but authentically involved in what's going on inside as a tapestry. A live growing creating colorful tapestry. (Gwen, Journal Entry, May 17, 2017)

We're all working together and like [our] tapestry on that last day—this 'wovenness'; like rivers flowing together. (T1, Post-Interview)

The tapestry metaphor provides a creative structure on which to build understanding and from which to observe the benefits of applying methodology to concepts, scenarios or tasks which appear initially to be chaotic, or even random. (S. E. Simon, 2013, p. 76)

Tapestry as a metaphor came from the participants dialoguing during their fourth research gathering. Part of the data collection process during each research gathering involved participants recording their ideas, thoughts and reflections within their small dialogue groups. One participant in each of the discussion groups assumed the role of note-taker and these became part of the larger collection of data in the form of participant field notes. On May 17, the participants were invited to review the field notes from the April 26 research gathering and synthesize their reflections together in the form of a bumper sticker. One of the groups came up with "Not museum pieces, but a tapestry." This resounded with the group as well as with me. From my own field note reflections from May 17: "Tapestry? How might we represent this idea of our time together in a more concrete and permanent way? Something that represents the third space we have created together?" As a result and in collaboration with T6 (with a background in fine arts), the idea of a canvas was created as a medium to give participants a venue through

which to record their understandings as our time together came to a close on June 14. (See Figures 4 and 5).



*Figure 4. Participants co-creating the visual canvas. Figure 5. Completed canvas.*

Presentation knowing as described by Heron and Reason (2008) is a way for participants in cooperative inquiry to articulate their experiential knowing nondiscursively through creative forms such as visual representations that help preserve the qualitative richness of an experience. As a result of the participants' co-created reflections and the experience of representing it visually through the canvas, “tapestry” seems a fitting metaphor to illustrate the second phase of the home-school connections research study.

#### **4.7 What about Doors?**

Through inductive analysis of the remaining transcribed research data, once again the use of the word door(s) surfaced and provides a glimpse into the participants' transformational thinking that occurred within the critical participatory action research process. This theme will help bridge the research narrative into its second phase.

Three parent participants in their post interviews and journal reflections made reference to the metaphorical door(s) as being representative of a barrier within the home-school interface.

P8: I was surprised—when our first child [started school] this year and you kind of think there's like this boundary, the door. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: I think the whole thing with the door last week was exactly what I've been doing. I'm not standing at the door anymore. (Post-Interview)

P7: We're all on the same level fighting for the same thing, but no one's willing to break down the door or the barrier and say, "let's engage together." (Post-Interview)

Gwen: We need to forget about doors, but need to focus on climbing through windows, cutting holes in the roof or even digging a tunnel because the home-school connection is going to take effort on both sides. Standing at the doorway or a said open-door policy is not enough anymore. (Journal Entry, May 17).

Two teacher participants also reflected and questioned their original use of the phrase "open-door policy." T11 and T2 suggested in their post-interviews how the words door and policy can be challenged due to the unquestioned assumptions and positionally powered rules that define the boundaries within which parents are expected to live.

T11: I think I said at the beginning that I have an open door policy. I need to change that. I have to think very carefully about how I want families to feel like we're working together. It's not them and us. Because there's still that role out there and parents are very intimidated sometimes by - you know, because teachers know best. But I certainly don't know best. (Post-Interview)

T2: I learned that I'm not as open-door as I thought I was. And, that's okay. I've always thought I welcomed parents into my classroom all the time. At this point in my teaching career I'm used to people being in my class so it's not intimidating or anything. But I just need to welcome them in different ways than what I've done in the past. Not as my

helper, but as my partner. Someone who's going to contribute to the learning in my classroom and the emotional well-being of the kids and not just someone who's going to switch up my home reading for the day. (Post-Interview)

Kim, while sharing her research experience as a guest presenter in a B.Ed. diversities class on October 16, 2017 used the door metaphor to represent how her thinking had evolved about her role in the home-school interface:

Kim: When I started teaching my door was always closed. Now my door is still closed (noisy middle school hallways), but now I say—my door is ALWAYS OPEN. My parents came in, but the door was closed. It's going to take a long time for both perspectives to shift (Presentation, October 16, 2017).

Door, as a prominent theme was shared with the participants at the last research gathering on June 14. This was intentionally done to involve them in the iterative cycle of action, reflection and transformation based on the first inductive analysis of the transcribed pre-inquiry interviews. This is in keeping with Herr and Anderson's (2015) contention that within the critical participatory action research process, group members are involved in at least some phases of research, such as reflecting on data analysis, and "to the extent that participants' understandings are deepened or they are moved to action" (p. 112). It is notable that the six participants who referred to door(s) again in their post-inquiry interviews, journals and guest talk demonstrated reflexivity by questioning or challenging the construct, their role and identities within the construct and spoke of future action to transcend and transform how they position themselves with each other in the home-school interface.

#### **4.8 Communitas and Liminality**

Communitas and liminality surfaced first as themes within tapestry through data analysis of post-interviews, journal reflections, and research gathering field notes. The concept of communitas represents a sense of connection created in an unstructured community in which people lose their socially designated status or role and become equals while sharing a common experience (Turner, 1969). Within this common experience, they share liminality together. Liminality refers to a state of being where people stand at the threshold between their previous and new ways of structuring their identity, time and community. During liminal periods, social hierarchies may be temporarily ignored enabling new ways of being and relating to develop (Turner, 1969).

Over a four-month period, the participants met on five occasions where they engaged in cyclical processes of conscientization framed around storying, dialoguing, and critical reflection within a communicative space (Freire Institute 2016; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014; Lykes & Mallona, 2013). Eighteen participants described aspects of communitas and liminality when asked to reflect on the research experience in their post-inquiry interviews and journal reflections.

T1, T3 and Kim explained how they realized there is a certain measure of personal vulnerability needed to be in authentic relation with others:

T1: I'm not the most open person and I really stretched myself to be kind of vulnerable and really opening them up to see that I have faults as a mom as well and that I could relate to struggles that they were having because I have had maybe similar struggles at home, too. Just being open and honest about that. We've connected and I think it gives parents and teachers an opportunity to kind of bond on a whole different level which you

don't have time to do necessarily with every parent, but even if it's with some. You know it changes everybody's lives; mine and theirs. (Post-Interview)

T3: What's really helped is I broke down my own personal barriers of feelings like I need to be this person who had all the knowledge and when a parent came in I need to somehow be ok with saying, "You know what I'm not really sure but I'd love to explore that with you, and let our child further that question for me, or what you're noticing about your child?" I think what I've noticed is just a kind of break down my wall of . . . they're just another person and they just want to come in and share their stories, too, and I have my own, too. (Post-Interview)

Kim: Having that opportunity to talk in a situation where it's not at school and it's not an official student-based conversation. It's just talking about teaching and parenting and bringing that together. It's having that opportunity because we don't have that opportunity—that really meant the most to me, having that opportunity to get to know them on a different level. (Post-Interview)

T5, T6, P5, T7, T11, and P10 all described how being in community with others who come from diverse backgrounds and contribute different perspectives enriched the experience and lead to a sense of connection through a common focus. Most importantly, these participants were able to shed their role as teacher or parent and find within the group a place of acceptance and belonging where their stories and voices mattered:

T5: As the weeks went on I came to so look forward to our meetings. I believe we were very like-minded in our thinking so we built on each other's' ideas very quickly, but also offered different (because we all had different experiences—P1 growing up in another country and then having my own overseas experiences and T3 having her experiences

and TC1 being a brand new teacher). It was very respectful, very inclusive. One of us would throw out an idea and we'd come in with different perspectives that made the conversation so collaborative, it was excellent. (Post-Interview)

T6: The whole group was really creating a family and a network and support. Those people were there to listen and just caring. It felt really good and wholesome. We had such a culturally diverse group within this network and it was fascinating to hear their different backgrounds and that's not something that continues to deepen and reiterate that we all have these backgrounds and stories, but there is a common thread no matter where we come from on our globe or our experiences or what culture or language—that there is need for connection. The feeling of being connected and that there is a place for us all—it felt really comfortable. (Post-Interview)

P5: Hearing we're all basically the same, no matter what the reputation of your school is, where it is, who the teachers are, who the kids are. It's all the same. It's all the same communication and representation. It was kind of that feeling of community with parents and teachers that I would not associate with because of different circles. (Post-Interview)

T7: Just having the opportunity to meet with people who are growing and learning together, talking about what we're trying and what's working and what's not working. Just feeling comfortable that everybody's going through a similar journey and we've all got things that we're trying and being able to share. It just reaffirmed that I don't have all the answers—the more we think together, the more we communicate, collaborate—the better understanding we're going to have—it sounds cheesy, but we're stronger together. [Collaboration] doesn't just happen among professionals—it happens among parents and

teachers. Collaboration defies roles. That shared understanding is so much deeper than my personal understanding. (Post-Interview)

T11: Being able to come together as a collective group that had a vested interest in changing education and people with caring hearts and just being in a non-threatening, warm environment. I wish schools felt like that, a very welcoming community of people and what meant the most to me was I was able to listen to other people's stories and sort of glean from them what I can use in my own practice, as well as my opinion counted. It was a very nurturing process. (Post-Interview)

P10: It makes me feel like we matter, like feeling like that relationship is meaningful, like we're all listening, like it's important. (Post-Interview)

P4, Gwen, P6, and P8 spoke of appreciating how coming together in the research community created time and a safe space for storytelling and conversations that normally would not have occurred in other circumstances:

P4: The connecting with my kid's teacher in an out of school context and in a way where we could have thoughtful, insightful conversations that weren't necessarily specific to my child but in general. Just the connections that were made, that was great and was the most important. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: It [research gatherings] really provided a safe space for everyone to share.

Especially when we were in small groups. People were very vulnerable. Sharing about our kids or sharing from a teacher's perspective—it was really rich. (Post-Interview)

P6: I really liked people sharing their stories. I'd never experienced that, so I had no idea what it felt like or what the parents were going through or how they could deal with it. I thought that was really valuable. I thought of it more as community. (Post-Interview)



P8: That whole community connection—everyone was there to do good, to try and that was really good. Overall it's just like the entire—home, school, everyone working together for the good of the little guy in a cooperative, interactive manner. (Post-Interview)

T5, P1 and P10 described that through the community research experience, they felt a sense of group agency, energy and momentum through the collective learning that occurred:

T5: What really struck me and is staying with me is that during the opening circle several parents said that they really felt that the group and the work was so important because we have a chance to make lasting change. I find this amazing that they really see the value in this group and really feel that it can make a difference. I love the agency! Belief that this small group can make a difference! (Journal Entry, April 26).

P1: It was really a lot of learning and really I could feel in that room - so many great brains. I could feel that energy there, that positive energy. I felt like we need to do something positive for this society together. (Post-Interview)

P10: I am feeling sad it's our last [gathering]. It's given me that group feeling again—part of learning with a team again and I've just loved that—it's been so great for me at a parent level (Field Notes, June 14).

T9, T1, P9, and P7 all described experiences that echo liminality through the research process where institutional hierarchical or socially-defined roles no longer mattered:

T9: I notice that we are all on an even playing field. I really can't tell who the parents are and who the teachers are. (Journal Entry, April 4)

T1: We are on the same level with parents, we have the same goals so we need to work together. Many hands make light work when we work together we can achieve more. (Journal Entry, nd).

P9: It's a step to awareness and if there's two people eating at a table...we're both equal.

(Post-Interview)

P7: So through the research group realizing that they don't have the answers any more than we do and they aren't any other different level than we are. We're all on the same level fighting for the same thing. (Post-Interview)

Finally, T7 in her journal reflection describes how living in *communitas* and experiencing liminality disrupted any previous boundaries that determined her role and institutional identity within the home-school interface:

I just feel more comfortable actually connecting . . . . Being able to talk to parents even though I myself am not one . . . . That was a barrier for me and definitely a label that I imposed prior to this study. "I am a teacher." "You are a parent." "My role is to teach, your role I don't have experience with so I am not comfortable to comment." These are the thoughts I had at the beginning of the year. Things have shifted. Though we have different roles, different literacies, different means, ultimately our goal is the same, to create a community around each child that encourages growth, fosters literacies and supports development. (Journal Entry, June 14).

The voices of the participants within the themes of *communitas* and liminality, tell a story of abating their role as teacher and parent in exchange for emphasizing being in relation with each other (Thayer-Bacon, 2010). Perhaps T9 best describes from her perspective what it meant to live in third space where *communitas* and liminality affected her:

I felt the positive connections between all the people there. I felt a sense of togetherness with everyone that was there. This sounds silly, but almost on a . . . sort of spiritual level. I can't explain it, but it was a feeling I got. Everyone was very vulnerable and open and

accepted everybody for who they were. And when we were in that room we were all on the same playing field. (Post-Interview)

Relationships are established within communicative hybrid spaces or borderlands in which people can think openly, respectfully and critically together to explore whether there may be better ways of conducting their current practices (Gutierrez, 2013). Interconnectedness and intersections of voices representing different lives. A tapestry of perspectives. Through critical participatory action research, space is created for communicative action in which people strive for intersubjective agreement about the ideas and the language they use, striving for mutual understanding of one another's' perspectives and points of view (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Participants not only became more aware and open to other perspectives, but also developed a stronger sense of themselves, their identity and their positionality in both their inner and outer lives. Thayer-Bacon (2010) explains this best:

I describe us as contextual beings, and I acknowledge the dominance of culture, yet I also describe us as people who are able to begin to understand the settings we are born into and how they have affected and shaped us. We gain insights into our contextuality with other people. As we begin to understand this contextuality, we begin to develop the ability to offer fresh, unique perspectives. Not only do we develop a sense of self due to the relationships we have, but we all become aware, to varying levels and degrees, of that sense of self and how our social contexts have affected the way we view the world through our relationships with others. Other people help us become aware of our own embeddedness. (p. 8)

#### **4.9 (Re)Negotiation as Teacher: Transformations of Identity and Role**

The next theme within phase two of the research study is an extension of participants experiencing *communitas* and *liminality*. In their post-interviews and journal reflections, nine teachers described transformations in how they define themselves as teacher in relation to not only their parent co-researchers, but also in their positionality as teacher with parents and families in general.

T2 and T5 both reflexively pondered on their past efforts to connect home with school discovering a renewed perspective on their role as teacher in engaging with families:

T2: It made me rethink what I do and how I approach people and how I include families or how up until that point really didn't include families. It made me realize how important it was and I am thankful that I did it. (Post-Interview)

T5: I always felt like I was about having families as part of the child's education, but it took me into a different level of thinking about it, where it's not about me the teacher creating something and then offering it to families, it's about how can we create it together? How can the families coming in and creating it together offer something different? That I'm not the only one that has the good idea, "Oh, let's have parents in and do this, it's that: How can we do it together?" (Post-Interview)

T1, T3, Kim and T11 all brought awareness to the different roles beyond that of teacher that help to inform their own identity and how these roles influenced their own positioning within the home-school interface with parents and families:

T1: I am a mom and a teacher. Mom—relatable. Teacher needs to be vulnerable, show who they are, allow kids/families to KNOW THEM!! History, culture, family/kids, home, values, true feelings. (Journal Entry, nd).

T3: I realized I thrive on relationships. I'm happier, I do better. I just feel stronger and happier about my role as an educator when I know I've connected with the families . . . I found that my background of big families and accepting everyone and having that open door—I needed to bring that out in my teaching and I found that through this—that home-school connection. (Post-Interview)

Kim: The fact that I'm not a parent affects how I connect or not with parents. Aren't we all perfect parents until we have kids?! I try not to judge, ever - actions or words when parents are dealing with their children, but it's not always easy. (Journal Entry, April 26).

T11: I am a teacher, yes, but I am also many other things . . . am mother, daughter, sister, niece, lady, girl, human—We need to remember to celebrate who we are and who our little people are. When teaching we MUST remember to honor, look, engage, respect little ones. It is NOT ABOUT US! (Journal Entry, June).

Several teacher participants alluded to the significance of taking up more of a role of listener and learner to what parents and families had to offer in terms of their knowledge regarding their children. This meant repositioning themselves from authorities and communicators of school-centric (Kemmis, 2006; Pushor, 2017) information towards being more open and appreciative of what parents and families might have to offer them.

T3 in her post-interview shares a complete deconstruction of what she imagined her role to be based on her own apprenticeship of observation as a child and now as a new teacher (Lortie, 1975):

Just being newer to teaching, I think I just reverted to "What did I experience as a child?" That was the teacher knew everything and my mom and dad would come in and the teacher told my parents what to do with me, or how to help me or my sisters in our

learning. When I first came in, parent-teacher interviews I almost didn't know what to do . . . . It didn't feel right to just be telling parents, rather than communicating with parents and inviting them to share information about their child with me. And telling them about their child in September when I'd only just met them. Once again that feeling doesn't feel right to me and so that has helped me realize that my role is to be working together with families and supporting their child in terms of what the parents think is best fit and what I think is best fit. (Post-Interview)

T1, T5, TC1, and T12 realized in their reflections that it is their role as teacher to create safe relational spaces of listening to and working with/ alongside parents and families rather than the more customary role of communicating to and planning for them:

T1: My wish is that I can find a way for parents to feel comfortable with me, to be open, to share, to bring their knowledge into the classroom in whatever capacity that looks like—it's my job to make them feel that way and to stretch myself to be open and vulnerable, too, so that they can feel that same way. (Post-Interview)

T5: My thinking around that is to honor all parents for their knowledge and understanding of their child. Get to better know them, listen to them, understand, honor and understand that each parent is different with different perspectives, goals, comfort. (Journal Entry, April 4)

TC1: I really like the idea of being able to ask families and parents how they want to support teachers and students—do it with the family, not for the family. I hope that is something I remember and will guide me as a teacher. (Post-Interview)

T7: Just being that person—not only are you the child's cheerleader, but you're kind of the parent's cheerleader, too. Just coming alongside them and we're in this together and it's not something that you or I need to do alone. (Post-Interview)

Finally, Kim explained in her post-interview how the investment of creating space and time for learning from and with parents and families as a priority might actually eliminate future unnecessary time consuming and potentially difficult situations:

I've always known that it's important to have parents involved, but it's reiterating the fact that it's really important to get the parents involved and to have them be right there from the very beginning in establishing those positive relationships. So that if there are issues, then you've already got a positive relationship with the parents and the parents know that you have the child's best interests at heart. So finding the time and finding ways at the very beginning to establish relationships, not it being just another thing that's going to add more to my plate that I have to do, but something that if I take the time to do, will probably take things off my plate later on. (Post-Interview)

As a result of being in *communitas* and experiencing liminality with others, teacher participants reflected upon their practices in the past that have been the blue print and architecture responsible for the kind of home-school interface they had experienced. Crossing boundaries of each other's thinking and weaving threads of different perspectives helped shape a tapestry of transformations. Living within liminal conditions with other participants appears to have transformed teacher participants' own identity constructs and how they might reconstruct their future attempts to invite a more productive and egalitarian home-school interface.

#### **4.10 (Re)Negotiation as Parent: Transformations of Identity and Role**

Parent participants also demonstrated transformational shifts in realizing their own identities and roles as parents and as partners with teachers and schools in their children's school experiences.

P1 reflected on how being in *communitas* with other participants helped her to reflect deeply on her identity as a mom and prompted her to change certain aspects of her parenting:

It has been such a positive change in me also like I have started looking at my children differently. Really like talking to you all I always thought that I am giving them a lot of my care and support. But somehow I learned that no, they are too tender, words matter, our moods matter, and things might be really small for us but could be really big for them. I can really affect their personalities. So really it has brought a change in me taking care of my kids now. (Post-Interview)

P10, in her post-interview and journal reflections described how experiencing *communitas* with the other participants helped her confront and reflect upon how her role within past experiences in the home-school interface may have contributed to less productive results when communicating with the teachers of her child:

I did a lot of self-reflection in terms of emotional response and emotional defense systems. For me it was a good time to look at myself and think of my role. Is there things that I am doing in communicating or building that relationship that I can do better? I identified certain things when I was journaling about some trust issues or emotional responses when I felt defensive or felt like they weren't on my team. When my defense system pops up I have to really be able to look at myself and be aware in those moments. (Post-Interview)



Often I go into conversations with the idea that I am the person with the most information and best understanding of how to help my kids. Although I do think in a lot of ways this remains true, I also need to remind myself to truly take in what the others are saying and seeing in the school environment. I know the approach needs to be different in various situations. In order to do this I need to look at my own history and what I bring to the table (Journal Entry, April 3).

Echoing the thinking and reflections of several teacher participants, P10 also came to an awareness about how important it is to live reciprocally within the home-school interface by listening and learning from what her child's teachers offer rather than being quick to defend her own position as parent.

P9 in his post-interview reflected on how spending time in his child's classroom sharing their families' funds of knowledge made a lasting impact on her learning and self-esteem. The experience also reinforced for him the significance of expanding his role and identity as father-teacher within the home-school interface:

It was nice to experience and see the rapport from the children. Mine in particular just said two days ago, 'I really like it when you came into the classroom, Dad. That was cool,' and had said that last week as well because she said that once before. So it's in her mind, those minutes, those hours, those times of involvement are just huge. Just from the feedback there, I guess it really bumped her self-esteem and inspired her. It was encouraging. (Post-Interview)

P6 in her journal reflection reflected on how experiencing *communitas* opened her thinking to new and different perspectives and also challenged her to not always accept the taken-for-granted rules of the school system. Similar to P9, she realized how her involvement

within her child's school world made a significant and lasting effect on her son's well-being and learning:

P6: I do know that I am very much a rule follower and if the system exists in such a way, I am likely to just follow the school system as it exists. This is the one point that will stick with me: to look outside the box and look for ways to be different or better.

Listening to different stories gave me perspective that I didn't have before. I am going to try to stay involved in school, even as life gets busier, because I do see how proud our son is when we come in and how excited he is to have us there. (Journal Entry, n.d.)

Gwen in her journal reflection and post-interview realized she also has much to offer her children's classrooms through her funds of knowledge. She expressed new found agency in the way she communicates as parent within the home-school interface expanding her role from volunteer to meaningfully contributing to the learning in her children's classrooms.

Gwen: This research group has changed how I interact with fellow teachers as a parent and as a colleague. This group has made me ponder how I can affect my boys' three classrooms by using my "funds of knowledge." (Journal Entry, June 24)

Gwen: I've just had way richer conversations with all three of my boys' teachers this year since February. I've done more authentic volunteering using my funds of knowledge. I did an orienteering lesson in my son's grade two classroom because I always remember as a teacher I feel like it takes all the literacies in and so I just asked her- it was super challenging. It's completely changed our whole discourse at home about home and school. (Post-Interview)

As previously mentioned, parent participants were already fairly comfortable with their assumed role in the home-school interface prior to the research experience. By living

communitas, liminality, and reflection through the research process, these parent participants demonstrated an expanded view of what their role could be moving forward. A “re-visioned” role that reflected more of a meaningful reciprocal partnership with their children's teachers and school.

#### **4.11 (Re)Positioning each Other within the Home-School Interface**

A fourth theme within phase two of the research process surfaced through data analysis. Similarly to participants describing (re)negotiation of their own roles and identity as teachers or parents, seventeen participants also expressed transformed perspectives on how they view each other's roles and identities within the home-school interface.

When asked if their expectations of parents and families had changed as a result of the research process in the post-interviews, eleven teacher participants demonstrated significant transformations in their thinking when compared to how they described their expectations of parents and families in their pre-inquiry interviews. Their responses suggested less of a policy-influenced Discourse to more of an empathetic and family-centered perspective. They expressed more interest in coming to better know and understand the interests and challenges of individual families before placing generic school-centric expectations and demands on them (Kemmis, 2006; Pushor, 2017).

T2, T1, T3 and T10 in their post-interviews each explained how their perspective on what to expect from families had shifted:

T2: First of all honoring every family for where they are and not expecting them to conform to your idea of what a family should be doing to contribute to their child's education. Like the home reading program, "Oh well, they didn't do home reading so they must be bad parents, well no!" Maybe it's just the way their life is and take the pressure

off. Maybe there's other ways that they're contributing and look at different avenues and supporting them how you can in where they're at. Some parents are able to and others want to be, but they can't.

T1: I don't want to put any more pressure on parents or want there to be this expectation over them that they have to live up to what every other parent is able to do. I think that their role is to do as much as they can do within their means. I don't want to open all these doors and options for parents and don't ever want them to feel like they have to attend all these things because there's just some parents who wouldn't be able to. I wouldn't want them to feel like their role is bigger. I would like to wear that on my shoulders and keep each parent's role attainable for that specific family [and say to children] "It's ok if your mom can't be at this function at school or just that they know that every family is different and that's what we want. We want everybody to be different."

T3: When I first started here, I sent home the home readings and the home spelling and the expectations weren't met. It was like, "Why are you not following through with this at home?" When I started to learn about the families and their struggles at home, the last thing they could do was sit and read with their child. Maybe they didn't have books at home to read, they were struggling to meet ends in terms of food. Some parents don't get home until 9 or 10 so that option to read and they're single parents. So I realized that sending home those types of things and demanding it was not the route to go. But rather inviting and suggesting and offering. I guess at home it can look very different depending on what is available at home.

T10: People forget that everyone's living their own storm and I think you have to look beyond why it's not happening [reading at home] (Post-Interview)

T7, T11 and T12 in their post-interviews also used family-centered language when asked to reflect upon what the role of parents and families is in supporting their children's school learning. Reflexivity is evident in their explicit awareness of stigma and judgement that accompanies traditional historically constructed assumptions about what parents and families ought to be doing with their children at home to support the school's main academic agenda.

T12: Really just being persistent in trying and not necessarily giving up on them, but understanding that maybe at that point they're not at a place where they can make those kinds of changes or make those commitments and not stigmatizing them or their children because of that.

T7: Everybody's involvement is going to be different based on what they are able to do, or want to do, and that my role is to be nonjudgmental.

T11: I think that families do the best that they can based on what tools they have. Just honoring that and moving from there. And take away the judgment. Even though I consider myself a nonjudgmental person, I think that sometimes occasionally we do. We have these slight things in our body language. Just being very honoring of their backgrounds and what they're bringing to the table and have that much more empathy and understanding. Families know their child best and how dare I impose my views. I have to think very carefully about how I want families to feel like we're working together. It's not them and us. Because there's still that role out there and parents are very intimidated sometimes because "teachers know best." But I certainly don't know best.

Kim, T7, T5, T9 and T6 in their post-interviews also echoed family-centered perspectives in their explanations of how to reach out to parents and families to encourage a more productive and relational home-school interface. These teacher participants believed that parent and family involvement in their children's schooling is vital, but also attended to how the home-school interface needs to be relational, reciprocal, flexible and self-determined by each family.

Kim: Each family is different. It depends on what they can do. Not all parents can be involved in the same way and not all parents are comfortable in being involved in the same way. But the importance of parents knowing that they can be involved if they want to be and involved in a way that they're comfortable doing.

T7: Being willing to have some sort of communication—what they're comfortable with in supporting their child. I don't know that it looks the same for every parent and I definitely don't expect parents to do what I do here.

T5: It's about understanding each other. Understanding where we're coming from and how best the families want to be involved in their children's' learning at school. I also want to honor the people who don't want that right now. I think that's really important. We make assumptions but we need to also honor if they don't want to be and still do the best we can for the child we can when they are in our care.

T9: We need to make our families feel more comfortable coming into schools because a lot of our families just through parent-teacher interviews are very intimidated by schools. Especially the ones who had negative experiences at school. I think families need to feel welcome when they come in and that they have something to offer. A lot of them are intimidated.

T6: It's a relationship and there's a voice on both sides and we really need to honor the families that we're working with, rather than just the teacher having their vision and just really inviting that perspective of family and their values, as well.

Through the voices of these teacher participants lives a new critical awareness about coming to really understand each child's family story to be able to personalize and differentiate relationships and expectations based on individual interests and needs. Treating all families as a homogenous group of people expected to comply and perform in “good parent” roles as defined and socialized historically through the dominant school Discourse has been critically questioned and redefined by these teacher participants.

Kim as a guest speaker in a B.Ed. diversities class post-inquiry, dove deeply into her transformed thinking and reflexivity about living within a reconceived home-school interface:

Kim: In the 1990s we learned that it's a triangle—parent, teacher, student. Making the triangle a circle is ultimately what we all want—what's best and how do we make it authentic? It's an even platform—not teacher over, not parent over. How do we make parent involvement authentic and what does it mean? I have a lens—how they should . . . But, that's not necessarily the way parents see it. I have no clue what the history is at home. It's enlightening when a parent brings in the background information. Parents should share, but we are still strangers. Why should they feel they have to tell me? Because of the project I realized the anxiety is on the other side, too. They are also worried about being judged—about us “should-ing” them. (Presentation, October 16)

P5 in her post-interview reflected on her shifting perspective of other parents and families that she has encountered who do not connect with school the way she does:

I would love it if all parents felt they could be involved in their child's school experience and their learning experience. I don't necessarily think that is realistic. I think there are just some people who don't want to be reached. They like those compartments, they like that their kid goes to school and that's the receptacle for them during the day. They don't much care what goes on in school during the day. And, that's ok for those people because that's just how they are.

P4 in her post-interview shared a perspective on the role of the teacher that acknowledges how everyone brings human complexity to what they do: "I learned that everyone even teachers and parents they bring their own pasts into their job." P7, P9 and P10 in their post-interviews extended this notion of complexity further by elaborating on how they learned through the research process more about the challenges teachers face within the home-school interface:

P7: It was great to just learn where the teachers struggle from their point of view from the classroom to us parents. Just connecting with another parent and seeing their same values, but seeing those connections where they break down and where they connect.

P9: The teacher's role is to be open minded and aware of what might be happening in the home—one of many roles. There's only so much one can do, right? And don't try to exceed that. Work within our means. What I have to offer (child's) teacher is a sprinkle in her bucket, but I think it does help and it has helped make that connection and that's where the learning begins.

P10: As a parent you focus on your child. But looking at it from the other side, you see that they're trying to do this with 25-30 other kids at the same time, so it can be a real challenge with the time and energy and what can they do? A lot of times their hands are tied as well. So I think trying to understand that they do want to make positive, like they



want to build that connection but sometimes it's hard and you have to give them some leeway there.

Gwen, in her attempt to make more meaningful connections with her children's teachers, intentionally endeavored to spend more time in their classrooms through the five-month research process. In her journal reflection, she described a conversation with one of her other children's teachers who was not part of the research group:

Gwen: I loved helping with painting, but the most beautiful thing was what she shared afterwards. She talked about her fear of inviting parents in as the children tend to get very energetic. She then mentioned that parents would think this is 'normal' and then talk to other parents about her not being able to control the class and her being judged and talked about. WOAHH - she said everything that I felt as a parent. I am worried that teachers think I am judging them. (Journal Entry, April 10).

Gwen, as well as all of the other participants quoted in this theme, opened themselves up to others through listening deeply to stories and perspectives other than their own. To hear stories about others' lives, and not to judge against a truth but to be open to many ways of knowing helps to listen from the heart and be open to a connected knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). Opportunity to step outside of their own roles and experiences and live in another's narrative or enter into other spaces invited critical awareness of the social realities that make up life tapestries other than their own. Through this process, participants (re)positioned themselves and others within the home-school interface.

P10 as a guest speaker in a B.Ed. Diversities class on October 16, 2017 described what it was like to (re)author her relationship with her son's teacher through the experience of the

research process: "I was listened to and trusted. I have valuable information as a parent. I am the expert on my son. This information helped her [teacher] meet his needs."

#### **4.12 Openings**

The fifth theme from phase two of the research study based on ongoing data analysis attends to the frequent occurrence of the words “open” or its derivatives in the participants' post-interviews and journal reflections. Openings is a further extension of the (re)negotiation and (re)positioning themes where participants shared their reflexive and transformational thinking of themselves and each other within the home-school interface. Participants used the term open to refer to themselves and their actions, to the space between home and school, and to the relationships with each other in the home-school interface. Openings suggests elimination of barriers, blurring of boundaries, interruption and disruption; a reimagining of space.

##### **4.12.1 Opening self.**

T1 in her post interview and journal reflections elaborated on how she had discovered that to facilitate her renewed understandings of the potentiality within the home-school interface requires a change in how she interacts with parents and families within that space.

T1: I'm not the most open person and I really stretched myself to be kind of vulnerable and really opening them up to see that I have faults as a mom as well and that I could relate to struggles that they were having because I have had maybe similar struggles at home, too. Just being open and honest about that. (Post-Interview)

T1: I never really opened myself up to my families—you know I was the teacher. I think I thought I did a good job of being open but this year I really brought me and my family into the classroom and I wanted my students to see me as a mom, as a wife, as a soccer player and as a teacher as well. (Post-Interview)

T1: Parents need to feel comfortable so they can be open, share, confide, rant—for them to be comfortable we need to open up first, show we are human, too. NO JUDGEMENTS.

(Journal Entry, n.d.)

T12 in his post-interview similarly shared how he now believes it is up to the teacher to create conditions for parents and families to trust enough to enter into a space that based on prior experiences may not be safe or trustworthy:

Really understanding maybe that they are coming from a place where school wasn't a positive experience, just really opening yourself up to letting them understand that you're there for their child and you're also there to help them, to lean on. To show them that things can be different. Their experience is not necessarily their child's experience.

P7 reflected on how in the past she has participated in the home-school interface perhaps without enough of a presence and has now discovered an opening where her voice will contribute and matter:

That I can use my voice. That I'm there and I always felt like I was open and approachable. Now that I look back and reflect, yes, I was present and I was there, but I don't think I gave that true indication that I am available. Now I have that voice to say, I am available. I am here.

Similarly, P4 describes a willingness to enter into a relationship within the home-school interface that is mutually honoring and reciprocally beneficial:

I really want to come alongside you in whatever capacity I'm able to. I want to support you and I just want you to know that I'm grateful for what you're doing with him and I want to know what's going on. I really want to have an open communication and open dialogue with you and that's all that matters.

#### **4.12.2 Opening space.**

T3, T7, T10, and T11 each shared in their post-interviews about the importance of not only creating an open communicative space within the home-school interface, but also positioning parents and families as valued knowledge holders within that space.

T3: It was such an eye opening experience because we often assume what parents might be thinking or just assume what students in our class might be thinking once they've experienced the day and go home. To have that eye opening piece of breaking down my own thoughts. Having P1 with me really opened up my perspective as to what her children felt while they were in the classroom in positive ways and sometimes negative. I thought it was really great to be able to see that I don't know everything. I can't assume that I know everything and the only way to help the students in my class better is to engage in those conversations with parents and have that open invitation to come in together and speak about their child's learning.

T7: It just helped me see parents from a different perspective. I'm very young and not a parent, so the only parents I've had in my life have been my own and to think about how these little people come to me and it can be kind of nerve wracking to be in charge of someone else's child for their growth and development. It was really a growing experience to be more open to different communicative parents and not being fearful of developing those kinds of relationships.

T10: There are lots of different people out there that have different circumstances and that have got different cultures, they've got different viewpoints, they've got different interpretations of things and I think when you're open to inviting those people in, then you get educated yourself. I don't think we capitalize enough on what parents have.

T11: Be more open and accepting of where families are and more open to what they are going to bring to the classroom.

T5 and TC1 in their journal reflections raised the notion of creating intentional opportunities of hospitable welcoming in schools and classrooms that could invite more ease and access for parents and families within the home-school interface.

T5: I think it is the teacher's job to ensure they are open and welcoming when some parents come to schools they may not feel comfortable and that they are walking into "someone's house" so teachers can/need to be overly open and welcoming. (Journal Entry, April 4)

TC1: Although my experience is limited, I think that welcoming open conversations with parents is one way to have their ideas come out earlier in the year the better. Asking parents how they would like to be involved rather than assuming. Having an open relationship with parents so that they feel comfortable being able to approach a teacher with problems—goes both ways. (Journal Entry, April 27)

#### **4.12.3 Opening relationships.**

Gwen, P5 and P9 explained in their post-interviews how through the research process they became closer to their child's teacher in a way that they had not previously experienced:

Gwen: So the teachers now are way more open like they're sharing more about themselves with me and things that I would never even know. I feel like before I didn't even really know my kids' teachers. This year I feel like I know my kids' teachers. They're talking more to me. I feel like . . . there's an openness.

P5: It was interesting and definitely opened up our communication, developed our relationship. We have a pretty special relationship after that now and it was interesting to

talk to the other teacher and parents to get to know them, to hear similarities and differences in how we view school.

P9: I keep the doors open for communication and connection and share the awareness with her now.

From a teacher candidate's perspective, the experience of *communitas* and *liminality* provided the kind of learning opportunities that could not be replicated in teacher preparation courses or even in practicum. TC1, in her post-interview reflected upon the impact of listening and learning from diverse perspectives - especially from parents who openly shared their lived experience stories:

I found we all brought something really different, especially with P1. She was very open and was the greatest for that. Coming up with stories from her past, her daughters which really gave me a sense of understanding because I'm not in a classroom yet. Gave me an understanding of a more personal level of what parents go through which was good.

Participants lived in *communitas* and *liminality* through the critical participatory action research process where each research gathering iteratively and cumulatively built on previous gatherings. Participants through the process of conscientization in dialogue over time developed deepening critical awareness of their social realities through ongoing reflection and action leading to transformation (Freire, 1999; Souto-Manning, 2010). Creating a discursive space opened up a new social space that fostered new interactions and different relationships. Shared dialogue over time lead to a communal or hybrid Discourse within the third space created and supported by *communitas* (Gutierrez, 2013; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 2011; Turner, 1969).

Participants together negotiated hybrid knowledge, identities and language to weave together

their experiences and (re)represent their thinking. P7, in a journal entry described the shared experience:

We are a tapestry of families woven together to create real partnerships. We are removing the door/barriers to connect through our diversities. We are giving awareness to a new way of thinking and connecting. Bonds, ripples, connected, values, school, home, community (June 14, 2017).

Discourse was transformed collectively through the second phase of the research process to represent more shared understandings and meanings among the participants. Third space became a generative space where relational and connected knowing lead to renegotiation of identities, roles and ways of positioning one another within the home-school interface (Gutierrez, 2013; Soja, 2014).

#### **4.13 "Not museum pieces, but a tapestry"**

S. E. Simon (2013) cites similarities among several researchers who have made reference to the nature of tapestry weaving as a metaphor that includes "complexity of the task, the aesthetic nature of the whole, the integration of crucial threads and the increased understanding of the phenomenon on the part of those involved" (p. 77). Participants in this inquiry over time experienced living and learning together not as "museum pieces, but a tapestry" (Participant field notes, April 4) together as social beings in relation to others (Thayer-Bacon, 2010). Through storying, dialogue, questioning, problematizing and reflection they found a metaphoric intersubjective vocabulary to help make meaning and represent their experiences within a third space. Soja (1996) defines third space as "a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange" (p. 5). Since social space is dynamic and constantly expanding, it remains open to possibilities for change and renegotiations of power, boundaries and identity. Participants

experienced transformational shifts in their understandings of self among each other within the home-school interface. Disruptions in understanding self and others has the potential to shake up the way things are done around here. Beers and Probst (2017) contend that: "Such thinking sets us on a path to change, if not the world, then at least ourselves" (p. 161). A path that invites us to question and challenge us to think and act differently.

Phase two of the research study captured the collaboratively constructed and socially produced third space experience of the participants. Soja's (1996, 2014) notion of openness in third space was made apparent through ongoing analysis of participant's post-interviews, journal reflections, and field notes from research gatherings, and illustrated metaphorically by the visual canvas artifact of "tapestry." Five themes emerge from the second phase of the research study:

1. *Communitas* and liminality: living the critical participatory action research process.
2. (Re)negotiation as teacher: transformation of identity and role within *communitas*.
3. (Re)negotiation as parent: transformation of identity and role within *communitas*.
4. (Re)positioning one another within the home-school interface.
5. Openings: Of self, space and relationships.

Critical participatory action research transforms reality in order to research it (Kemmis, 2013). Within the research process participants experienced Freire's notion of conscientization; a participatory process of connecting by living and learning in and with each other and the world (Freire, 1972, 2000; Souto-Manning, 2010). During this phase of the research, participants encountered each other experientially, "through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance" (Heron & Reason, 2008, p. 367). Gwen articulated while guest speaking in a B.Ed. class on October 16 how the research experience brought life to a space that historically



and traditionally tends to be quite inert: "We are beyond museum pieces that force us to look at each other, but a tapestry that has us weave together."

Teacher and parent participants came together out of interest to collectively story, dialogue and reflect on the intersections of their shared world. Renegotiated understandings of self and others, questioning taken-for-granted practices and assumptions, and a new Discourse was collectively authored within a liminal third space. For the participants in the research study, it seemed important to give form to their experiences both past and present. What was previously framed structurally through the metaphor of door, was now cast relationally and metaphorically as a tapestry. Representing tapestry nondiscursively made permanent the qualitative richness of living *communitas* with each other. Heron and Reason (2008) attempt to name and frame this kind of experience propositionally:

Worlds and persons are what we meet and the reality of the relation of meeting, its qualitative impact, declares the tangible sense of the realness of the presence of each to each, and of each to herself or himself, and all this in a shared field. We can only describe it metaphorically, but we can sense its qualitative shifts as the dynamic of the meeting unfolds. (p. 368)

The participatory process of conscientization (Freire, 1976, 2000; Souto-Manning, 2010) involved dialogue through storying, followed by collective then personal critical reflection, transformation leading to some form of action. From recursive data analysis using post-inquiry interviews, journal reflections, the visual canvas artifact and field notes surfaced the metaphor "bridge" to represent the third phase of the research study.

### **Phase Three: Bridge**

The relationship of parents and teachers is that of a bridge.

A bridge requires anchors on both sides, connection between the two.

It requires effort to strengthen that connection (T7, Journal Entry, April 4).

As an object, the bridge has a functional and aesthetic design that in a direct and powerful manner demonstrates its function, which is to connect geographical areas that would otherwise have been separated. The function of the bridge is to overcome barriers that stand in the way of mobility and free passage, whether it is a river, a cliff or a fjord. Thus, a bridge allows for freedom of movement for all who wish to cross and who find the bridge sufficiently stable and reliable. The bridge represents an opportunity to explore the other side and to journey into new areas. It opens a safe connection to places which earlier may have been unknown because they were not accessible (Skrefsrud, 2016, p. 139).

Bridge, like the image of door, represents a physical structure known to serve particular functional uses. Unlike door, however, in this phase of the research, bridge embodies a different metaphoric narrative through the voices of the participants. Whereas door thematically represented policies, rules, norms, concerns and expectations, bridge thematically incites connectedness, accessibility, symmetry, safety, and strength. Bridge articulates and makes the lived experiences of collective third space more tangible (Gutierrez, 2008).

#### **4.14 Connectedness: Building Relational Bridges**

T7 in her journal reflection uses bridge as a metaphor: "The relational bridges built between myself and the parents of the children - through conversations, I know that these relationships have meant as much to the parents as they have to me" (June 14). Just as bridges are constructed to create interconnections between places of familiarity and in-between places of

diversity, Gwen, Maleeka, T9, and Kim in their post-inquiry interviews, reflected on the value of connecting relationally with each other to find resonance within their diverse perspectives:

Gwen: Getting to know my son's teacher on a different level and really resonating with Maleeka and her culture and hearing about Ramadan and hearing about what she was going through as a mom and how similar it was to my own journey. Just finding those connections with both of them was really deep.

Maleeka: I learned getting closer to the teacher, she is very good, very responsible. To me, it's Gwen because I don't have a relationship with other moms. That was really great. I feel like she want to be close to me and to know my culture. I feel like because I'm from a different country that was great. I feel like that we are getting close. Like you know when we meet at school if it wasn't for the research we would never talk to each other.

T9: You let them know, "You know what? I want to get to know you besides you just being such and such a mom. I want to get to know you, the things you do, the things that interest you, what you're passionate about" and just make them feel that's something that's really valuable. We want to have more of those conversations.

Kim: It's just talking about teaching and parenting and bringing that together. It was an opportunity to get to know them better and to see things from a parents' perspective and really see where we connect in terms of teachers and parents. Also where the gaps are—where they feel the gaps are and where I feel as a teacher the gaps are and how we can bring those together.

T1, T7, P4, T10 and P10 in their post-inquiry interviews all spoke of learning how to foster a relationship that challenged the traditional respective roles they had been socialized into and become accustomed to prior to the research experience:

T1: She was able to communicate with me and share a lot of personal things with me made me feel like I must have been doing a good job in making her feel comfortable. I think part of that is me opening up as well. Because I think if I have walls up parents are going to have walls up, too. I always kind of kept personal and work separate, so it was interesting to try and kind of mold those two together.

T7: I will continue to take into account things like active listening, just developing the relationship with the parents so they feel comfortable coming in and talking to me about things...not only are you the child's cheerleader, but you're kind of the parent's cheerleader, too. Just coming alongside them and we're in this together and it's not something that you or I need to do alone.

P4: Getting to know these teachers who are with my child every day in a more personal way. Just to talk with them and share with them their ideas and that coming together improved our relationship on campus and at the school. Giving me ideas and insights for how to change how I communicate with the teachers or even just ideas of what I could bring or how I could come alongside the teacher. It's more of relationship with the teacher that changed. Just the bonds and relationships that are made between.

T10: I learned to just slow down and take the time to talk to parents and make those connections with parents and invite parents in and be more open and more conscious of making connections.

P10: It makes me feel like we matter, like feeling like that relationship is meaningful, like we're listening, like it's important. Right away start to approach that relationship mindfully and build an authentic relationship where you can really grow together.

P1, P7, P9 and P10 in their post-inquiry interviews portrayed a sense of togetherness, of offering something to each other of value, of contributing as true partners connected by a mutual interest in nurturing the child that brought them together:

P1: When working as a team, we would think together and there were things that I knew.

Ok she's sensitive and I'm sensitive, so we think on the same lines. But then there were things that as a parent I thought differently, and as a teacher she thought differently. How we can correlate them?

P7: Seeing where I can go after being in a research group say for next year, how to connect with her teacher next year and keep that going so that we can foster that relationship and not just be 'the mom', 'the teacher,' and that we can be that team together. I've always thought of us as a team—I just never reached out enough to let them know that we are a team.

P9: You have to have that connection first before anyone can actually learn. Keep the doors open for communication and connection and share the awareness.

P10: Having that opportunity to build that stronger relationship so that we could be better team members for (child)—that was really great. I learned a lot about where she was coming from and saw that she was a team player. There was a lot more trust there, too.

#### **4.15 Accessibility: Co-building the Bridge**

P6 in her post-inquiry interview speculated on perhaps why not all parents and families are as interested as she is in connecting with their child's school and teachers: "I think that's why people just drop off their kids and run because they feel like they're not approachable." In order for bridges to be effective, they must first be designed and constructed with accessibility for all.

Gwen, P9, T9, T10, and T12 in their post-inquiry interviews came to realize that the job of building bridges requires someone to first reach out to the other in order to truly connect:

Gwen: Connecting . . . I think it's up to me. I think my teacher can do what they're going to do, but I think it's up to me to create that bridge and to create that authentic connection and I need to work on that.

P9: Bridging of home and school is so important and to be involved in strategies in how to make that happen more often or to be involved. Bridging the two which takes myself to be that bridge. Encouraging the home, the school, day to day things, just bridge it.

T9: I think it's up to us to create opportunities because I think parents find it difficult to do that. If we create opportunities it will grow and give parents the confidence.

T10: I have to think of ways that we can make more connections with parents and deepen that connection not only just with parents that we see as available. I feel I want to reach more parents and whether being able to do that within the confines of the school day or whether we need to do it outside of the school day.

T12: It's on the teacher to really take initiative by inviting the parents in and opening up your classroom to them you create those strong relationships and not just relying on administration or the school community, but really fostering your own and creating your own community.

Another aspect of accessibility within the home-school interface was raised by P1 during one of the research gatherings. She observed that sometimes diversities are a source of insecurity which interfere with home and school meaningfully connecting:

For me as a parent I don't have problems speaking English, but those that do have language problems . . . . Finding a way, a phone call—tell them special things about their

child. We'd like to meet you, we'd like you to come, those parents that never come. They know so much. I think when you appreciate somebody—it gives them confidence. Those parents that never come they should be encouraged to get involved. I have seen them—it's a lack of confidence.

T6, P1, T1, T5 and Kim spoke of accessibility in terms of being persistently invitational and welcoming, providing meaningful opportunities, and understanding comfort or lack of comfort with each other in the home-school interface:

T6: It's a relationship and there's a voice on both sides and we really need to honor the families that we're working with, rather than just the teacher having their vision and just really inviting that perspective of family and their values, as well. Teachers still need to initiate it because they're in that role, but now my thinking has changed in how long that power needs to be there. Making that initiation but really putting that effort in constantly inviting families in different ways.

P1: Just stand in the doorway, just say hi to them. Just give them a smile. The parents love talking to you. If you are the first one to ask, “How was your day?” “How is everything?” They just start the conversation and then as a teacher it's a lot to ask, but you keep track. Ok you know I am always meeting this kid's parent, but this kid's parent doesn't come. So you to then plan, “How can I?”

T1: What can I do above and beyond so that I'm creating a comfortable environment for parents to come into? I'm creating a lot of opportunities because parents work so how can I make sure everybody can come at different times and what works for them?

T5: It's broadening my thinking in terms of involvement. Maybe I need to reach out to [parents] and say, "your child mentioned she would love for you to come and I just want

you to know that you are so welcome to join us." Because maybe some families don't feel comfortable.

Kim: Not all parents can be involved in the same way and not all parents are comfortable in being involved in the same way. But the importance of parents knowing that they can be involved if they want to be and involved in a way that they're comfortable doing.

T11, TC1, and P7 framed accessibility through a lens of partnership by considering how to reciprocally engage with each other rather than unquestioningly pre-determining and defining roles and expectations within the home-school interface.

T11: I will really think carefully about how I word things and how I propose things.

Events or activities in the classroom—I would like it to be more participatory so that the parents feel like it's their place of learning, as well. Like we're working together for a common goal.

TC1: I really like the idea of being able to ask families and parents how they want to support teachers and students—do it with the family, not for the family.

P7: When we approach this we are a team, here's our dynamics that we deal with, where the standpoint is. If I can assist in any way, drop me an email, a note, anything. If you want to connect for the two minutes I'm here at drop off or pickup, let's do it together.

#### **4.16 Symmetry: Balanced Bridge Building**

Structurally and visually bridges need to be anchored and balanced, proportioned and symmetrical, and accessible from both ends. T11 in her post-inquiry interview describes her view of symmetry within the home-school interface. "It means a partnership. We're in this together. It's not us and them." P4 in her post-inquiry interview described her desire for balance



and unity within the home-school interface: "Less of an attitude of you versus me and more of—we're a team. More of that for me personally, but to extend it to other people, too."

From the participant May 17 group discussion field notes: "Both sides can give a little for each side to realize that we all care about the child and are there for the same purpose". T10, T1, T9, P8, T7, and T5 built upon the same notion of finding symmetry and balance with the home-school interface placing the child at the center by leveling the hierarchy, positioning all with equality of importance, and working with rather defining roles for each other:

T10: You look at the child and they're in the center of that connection—child in the middle, home on one side and school on the other. Quite often there is a tug of war. I've been illuminated to the fact that it's not a tug of war. We're a bond and the stronger the bond between the family, home and the stronger you feel that the child is in the center and what you can do to make that person the best they can be enables you to know that with that connection both sides are as important as each other.

T1: The word team comes to mind, friendship. I think it's really working with parents to . . . not just sending report cards home, but working with them day to day, week to week to really have them help me as a teacher so that I can help their children more. It's really just kind of breaking down all those barriers and not having home and school being above. Like the teacher being above home but it means that we're all working together. That's really what I see with the home-school connections now is that we're overlapping and there's things that I can learn from parents and hopefully things that I can share with them so that we can hopefully grow this child into the best little person they can be.

T9: I feel that the better the connection we make with the parents about their child, the more positive experience that the child has at school because we're all one. We're all

thinking the same thoughts and we're all wanting to help the child and when we say there's not a resistance everyone's working together for the child's best interest.

P8: Just bring in more—like valuing the parents and their knowledge of the student. I think I now know more the value of it [my knowledge]. The value of connecting and also the giving of the knowledge about the student.

T7: It's not like I'm the expert on all things developmentally about their child. I have my set knowledge, but they also have theirs and it's a partnership to figuring out what is the best learning plan for their child (Post-Interview)

T5: It means about the equality. Not again, about me planning something for the parents, it's about how can we bring it together to make it more democratic. It's about the democratic process about shared decision making, not about the teacher being the one and the parent waiting to be invited and asked. It's about understanding each other.

Understanding where we're coming from and how best the families want to be involved in their children's' learning at school. It's about how can we create it together? How can the families coming in and creating it together offer something different? That I'm not the only one that has the good idea, "Oh, let's have parents in and do this, it's that: How can we do it together?"

T3, T10, T5, P7 and P9 in their post-inquiry interviews acknowledged reaching out to each other as sources of information and knowledge, valuing and learning from differing perspectives, and inviting families' lifeworld literacies into the classroom and school learning into the home. Symmetry of learning; symmetry of relationship; anchored equally in both school and lifeworlds:

T3: I think that's something I've realized the more I've reached out to their families, the more I invited their families to be part of their learning, I realized that they learned more because they felt a part of them was in that classroom every day. They didn't have to turn on this different identity when they walked in the door. They could keep theirs. I think that to me it was eye-opening.

T10: There are lots of different people out there that have different circumstances and that have got different cultures, they've got different viewpoints, they've got different interpretations of things and I think when you're open to inviting those people in, then you get educated yourself. I don't think we capitalize enough on what parents.

T5: If we are really open to asking them how they want to see their role in supporting their children at school—and maybe they don't know. Maybe we brainstorm together because like I said I learned so much from P1 coming in and she has a different perspective.

P7: I understand your role, and this is my role. Being able to use that language and to say that we are the connecting and we are team and that we want to foster that team and be there for each other...These are our family dynamics and this is how I see school fitting into our family dynamics and putting that together.

P9: I think that's to be on the same page, working toward the same goal but sharing more information. Pertinent things. Maybe a little bit more history, shared histories.

Reciprocity lives in the symmetry articulated by the voices of the participants. As explained in the family-centered practice literature (Epley, et al., 2010; Keyser, 2006) and theorized in ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992), both teachers and parents as members of a child's mesosystem have knowledge, expertise, experience and resources needed

for both educating and caring for each child. Children's emotional safety, sense of well-being and overall human flourishing are deeply affected by the adult relationships that surround them (Keyser, 2006; Weiss et al., 2014). The words of T10 in her post-inquiry interview represent this notion best: "There isn't a tug of war anymore. It's sort of more like a flow. We're more of a team now."

#### **4.17 Safety: Risks and Rewards**

Skrefsrud (2016) describes bridges as openings to "a safe connection to places which earlier may have been unknown because they were not accessible" (p. 139). Awareness and attention to the need for a sense of safety for both teachers and parents within the home-school interface surfaced through data analysis of their journal reflections and post-inquiry interviews. Kim, T9, TC2, and T12 in their post-inquiry interviews and TC1 in her journal reflection spoke and wrote of the uncertainties that may result from speculation, rumors, myths, biases and assumptions about what or who lives on the other side of metaphorical doors within the home-school interface:

Kim: As teachers we have those parents we're sort of warned about and as parents there are teachers that they're warned about. Parents feeling uncomfortable about coming and talking to teachers and not sure whether a teacher is open to conversation or not because there are some who are and some who aren't. How do parents figure that out? How do teachers figure that out without being nervous about putting yourself out there? I think that was one of the biggest things, like how do we bridge that initially so that hesitancy doesn't right from the very beginning?

T9: We need to make our families feel more comfortable coming into schools because a lot of our families just through parent-teacher interviews are very intimidated by schools.

Especially the ones who had negative experiences at school. I think families need to feel welcome when they come in and know that they have something to offer.

TC2: It's hard sometimes for parents to come into school territory. It might be uncomfortable for them. They might feel like a teacher has more power or is higher when they're in that environment. It's very important for a teacher to foster a connection with parents and kids to make it a safe and comfortable place for them.

T12: Really understanding maybe that they are coming from a place where school wasn't a positive experience, just really opening yourself up to letting them understand that you're there for their child and you're also there to help them, to lean on. To show them that things can be different. Their experience is not necessarily their child's experience.

TC1: I really appreciated the acknowledgement of both families and teachers not necessarily feeling safe enough to connect or come to events. As a student myself I have felt that disconnect and I am sure many other students feel the friction and hostility that some parents and teachers have, often created by the years of conflict with other parents or teachers (Journal Entry, March 2).

Having realized this state of insecurity led participants to address the need for creating spaces of safety and comfort built on mutual trust. As T6 in her post-interview proposed: "I wish for families and parents to feel included. I wish for families to feel that school is a safe place and a place of trust and care." TC2 also pondered the question of how to build trust in her journal reflection:

I heard others wondering how they can work with some parents who do not agree with the way they are teaching and are not feeling trusted. Parents continue to complain to them and their principal about their teaching practice. This makes me wonder—how do

you connect with the parents who don't trust you? It makes me nervous beginning my teaching career hearing these stories of parents distrust and complaints. I want to think building trust and connection at the beginning of the school year will help but there may still be some who are not on board. How do you gain their trust and respect?

Trust is a precursor to connectedness, accessibility and symmetry when building bridges that are safe to navigate from both sides. T9, P10, T1, and P6 in their journal reflections and post-interviews identified relational trust as vital within the home-school interface:

T9: They need to trust me and know I will respect their privacy and keep the information confidential. This will help to move forward in our attempt to make their child's school life more positive and happy. This is one very important reason to CONNECT and build relationships with parents. It is so easy to judge a situation yet far more productive to dig deeper and find out the roots of a problem (Journal Entry, April 4).

P10: It is great when teachers can present to students and parents that though they are professionals with an important job to do, they are also human. Meaning they make mistakes, have families, are learners, etc. I think this role [teacher] demands the establishment of authentic relationship to be successful on both sides, it is absolutely necessary. When we are able to see others as human beings we are able to trust more easily (Journal Entry, May 17).

T1: I feel that parents always trust us with their kids. They send them in every day, so they must trust me to watch their kids. I really hope that we can get on this even playing field and I don't want to be the teacher above the parents. I really want us all to be educators together (Post-Interview)

P6: Trust is probably a big part of it. I don't think [teacher] wants to invite us and make us feel that we can't trust her with whatever is going on, right? I think people are scared, right? They feel that they're not allowed. I would hate to say they don't care. But unless you talk to them and figure out the reason, either they don't care or they're scared or something's putting them off. I think they think they're not allowed (Post-Interview)

Gwen, P10 and Kim in their post-interviews shift their focus to how relational safety within the home-school interface impacts the experiences of children in classrooms:

Gwen: I really feel like if kids don't feel safe in the classroom and don't feel like there's that home-school connection, they can't do anything. Behavior or literacy. Imagine if we had that connection. Every child was connected to their parents and their teacher authentically.

P10: He lags developmental skills but not to focus on the behaviors. Focusing on those lagging skills and how we as a team push him ahead in learning those skills and collaborate together in partnerships. To really not look at him as his behaviors. Kids aren't what their behaviors are.

Kim: I think that finding a way to do that at the beginning of the year so that parents feel comfortable coming into the classroom and also that the students feel proud of who their family is and where they're coming from. Excited about sharing that and not being embarrassed about being different.

There is potential that lives in overcoming barriers based on misconceptions and entrenched narratives based on biases and preconceived Discourses. Participants realized that despite their pre-inquiry accustomed ways of practicing within the home-school interface, there were discoveries and realizations that forever disrupted their former ways of thinking, doing and

relating with and about each other (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Mackay (2003) suggests that critically and consciously examining the inner workings of a Discourse is the first step towards disrupting and liberating the perpetual unconscious and taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in its existence. This participatory research challenged the inner workings of a Discourse that far too often pathologizes parents and families as deficient when they do not align with how they 'should' act and who they 'should' be within the home-school interface. Conversely, it also challenged the hegemonic positioning of teachers as expert, superior, and unreachable (Ippolito, 2012; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Nakagawa, 2000; Pushor & Murphy, 2004). Participants came to appreciate that trust built upon being in relation with each other encouraged less of a judgmental conversation towards more of an assets-driven reciprocal relationship. Safety lives in relational trust that serves to bridge a historically lived divide within the home-school interface.

#### **4.18 Strength: Stronger Together**

In order for bridges to be safe, stability and strength are necessary structural elements that require ongoing attention, maintenance and even repair. From the April 4 research gathering, participant field notes expressed: "Our experience is that when the relationships are positive, it strengthens ourselves, the personality, and the child. We think that trust within the mesosystem is key to success—mutual trust and respect."

A final theme within the bridge metaphor is the notion of strength articulated and reinforced by T7, P10, T9, and T12 in their post-interviews:

T7: It just reaffirmed that I don't have all the answers—the more we think together, the more we communicate, collaborate—the better understanding we're going to have—it sounds cheesy, but we're stronger together.



P10: We're building better connections—how can we build stronger relationships with the school and families—why it is so important? It's central to our child's education—how can we do it better? There's an assumption that it's just in the background, but it needs to be one of those things that's in the forefront of it and right in the beginning everyday we're thinking about it.

T9: I feel that the better the connection we make with the parents about their child, the more positive experience that the child has at school because we're all one. We're all thinking the same thoughts and we're all wanting to help the child and when we say there's not a resistance everyone's working together for the child's best interest. Once you know parents and situations and parents confide in you about what's going on at home, you see more of where this child is coming from and it helps you develop a bit stronger relationship with the child and the family.

T12: Really collaborating with them to share some of the knowledge that they might have and bring in that I even don't have. Just make sure they feel honored and valued—strengthening that bond especially early on in the primary grades can only yield positive results moving forward.

Morgan (1986) proposes that: "Metaphor is often regarded just as a device for embellishing discourse, but its significance is much greater than this. The use of metaphor implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally" (pp. 12-13). T7 took up the metaphor of bridge in her post-inquiry interview as a means to represent her thinking and reflect upon the collective research experience:

It's that openness to cross the bridge or to taking a step onto the bridge. Some people can walk fully across the bridge, or they meet the teacher in the middle, whereas a lot of

people kind of stay on their side of the bridge. But on the other side, you can have the teacher that's had maybe not so good experiences with parents so they can be fearful in crossing that bridge. Or maybe they're again that personality that's ok to reach out to people and bring them across.

T7's illustrative metaphor illuminates that just because a bridge as a structure exists does not mean it is easy, safe or accessible to all who are invited to cross. How people choose to navigate a bridge relies upon the stories they carry within them based on past crossing experiences:

I think the more we know about each other, the more grace we'll give each other and willingness to cross the bridge. I wish parents and families would be open and comfortable to take steps on the bridge with me. (Post-Interview)

#### **4.19 "Bridging in Parallel"**

"Bridging in parallel" (P9, field notes, March 2) summarizes the essence embodied in the third phase of the research study. Bridging in parallel captures the culmination of the critical participatory action research experience from which emerged intersubjective understandings of multiple perspectives and positions within a new hybrid Discourse.

Five themes emerge from the third phase of the research study:

1. Connectedness: Building relational bridges.
2. Accessibility: Co-building the bridge.
3. Symmetry: Balanced bridge building.
4. Safety: Risks and rewards.
5. Strength: Stronger together.

Participants through reflection upon their lived third space experience within *communitas* demonstrated enhanced understandings of their own situatedness along with displays of empathy that deepened their understanding of each other as articulated in participant field notes from June 14: "Awareness has caused bridges between home and school." Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) tells us there are contradictions that live in "productive symmetric relationships" as well as "coexistence between boundaries and bridges; open access and closed doors" (p. 243). She posits that empathy and respect are key to successful home and school connectivity by positioning parents and teachers "on the same side of the table, joined in their support of the [child], coordinated in their efforts to problem solve, open in their expression of needing each other" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 243).

Bridge as a metaphor aligns with Kim and Sheridan's (2015) relational approach to home-school connections which focuses more on the mesosystem interpersonal relationships between families and schools, rather than on the structural approaches that are policy-driven activity and event-based. A focus on interpersonal relationships recognizes shared roles and responsibilities among families and schools and allows for bridging cooperation, coordination and collaboration that serves to ultimately enhance the educational experience for children (Kim & Sheridan, 2015).

Through the research process, participants came to first realize the existence of a space that lives between home and school, and secondly, the significance of either ignoring or nurturing that space. As T2 articulated in her post-interview:

It made me think about the mesosystem . . . that connection between family and school and home and whether we nurture it or not, it's there. If we nurture it, it's so much more beneficial to the kids and everybody involved. It's worthwhile.

A relational Discourse was created within the research study's *communitas* through the process of conscientization in critical participatory action research. This relational Discourse is reflected in teachers' and parents' voices showing a transformed understanding of their own situatedness within a wider social context while demonstrating the ability to also see and value each other's perspectives (Thayer-Bacon, 2003).

T1 in sharing her research experience as a guest speaker in a B.Ed. class four months after the conclusion of the research gatherings articulated a relational perspective on the home-school interface:

The home-school connection can be simple—I started by putting myself out there by being vulnerable. I face the same challenges as they do. I am very open about my family—I share everything—it bridges—not two steps above, but connected. We face challenges together as a team when it comes to "our" child. (Presentation, October 16)

The phases of the research process began with door as a metaphor and how the interface between home and school could be thought of as a barrier or as a point of entry. The next phase represented by tapestry framed how participants came to understand and build on each other's voices and stories within their co-constructed tapestraic space. This led to bridge as a metaphor representing how relational connectedness within the home-school interface is an ongoing process that requires effort and symmetry from both sides to ensure strength and accessibility. These three representative phases of the research study could have come to a conclusion. However, recursive inductive analysis lead to further deductive analysis which led to a fourth phase. For participants, ripples or the notion of rippling metaphorically represented generativity and future movement much like the image of a stone dropping in water.

## **Phase Four: Ripples**

"I feel like we've got this ripple started. We've dropped the rock and the ripples are slowing going." (T1, Post-Interview)

"[The rippling effect] refers to the fact that each of us creates—often without our conscious intent or knowledge—concentric circles of influence that may affect others for years, even generations. That is, the effect we have on other people is in turn passed on to others, much as the ripples in a pond go on and on until they're no longer visible but continuing at a nano level (Yalom, 2008, p. 83).

Rippling as a metaphor embodies a sense of accelerative motion, a generativity; releasing the energy of possibility; an enchantment with what might yet be (Ledwith and Springett, 2014). The concept of “ripples” or “ripple effect” surfaced in the participant field notes during the April 4 research gathering: "This is VITAL—it has a rippling effect that is both immediate and lifelong" (Participant Field Notes, April 4). Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory was a topic of discussion during this gathering and participants engaged in storying and dialoguing about their experiences within the mesosystem either as parent or as teacher. Ripples as a metaphor appeared again in participant reflection journal entries and post-inquiry interviews as well as during a guest presentation in a B.Ed. diversities class on October 16. Gwen explained her experience in the research process: "I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but it was a new birth as a mother. It's a ripple effect that creates waves."

### **4.20 Moving forward: "We Create Ripples as we Foster this Connection."**

It became clear that participants in their post-inquiry interviews and journal reflections embodied a sense of futurism, of hope, of moving forward with a newfound sense of purpose, as reflected in P7's May 17 journal reflection: "We create ripples as we foster this connection." P7

also articulated in her post-inquiry interview: "Giving our voice and it'll slowly all come - If we keep our voice, the ripple effect will come." T6 declared in her post-inquiry interview: "We've lived our way into a new way of thinking—how could you live your way backwards?"

Gwen, T1, Maleeka, P5, P4, P9, and P10 echoed the same sentiment:

Gwen: I'm going to talk about this experience—if 25 of us take our experience and take it out into the world and we affect five people and they effect five people—we are going to change the world. I truly want to disrupt what is being done. (Post-Interview and Journal Reflection, May 17).

T1: I'm really excited to be moving forward with other teachers—what can I share with them from this experience that we can do it as a community. We'll make a bigger impact as a community than just me with one class. I'm starting to make sure that I'm maybe the one that needs to provide these opportunities for them so that we can connect. (Post-Interview)

Maleeka: Small steps like talking to other families, other friends. I can do it, I think, but that's further than this [talking to newcomer families in her job] so they don't fall in the same thing, like receiving or accepting. (Post-Interview)

P5: I think it's up to the royal we that have been involved in this to bring it forward and talk to other parents and just to continue to be part of the school community. To not take a step back as best you can. (Post-Interview)

P4: How can we make these ripples continue to spread? Having conversations with other parents when you pick up your kid at school or when they give you the class list at the beginning of the year or you have playdates with another kid or you come together talking about these things or of those of us that are in the group sharing our experiences,

sharing what we've learned. Sharing how our thoughts have changed or how we would approach things now. (Post-Interview)

P9: Take the initiative because you have nothing to lose. Instead of being caught up in that cycle of not doing anything about it and wondering why it's not changing. I hope it brings more awareness out there and breaks down some barriers and some more collaborative work. There are a lot of variables. It opens up each variable a little bit, one drop at a time. (Post-Interview)

P10: You can do it even just sharing with one or two other teachers. Or by leading by example, right? You're setting the standard by leading by example. Somebody next door is going to watch what you're doing, they're going to come talk to you if they're interested, right? The parents are going to see what's happening and then next year they're going to approach their teacher in a different way. Something's going to change—might have changed within them of feeling more trusting, feeling more open to get more involved in the school. As long as we keep being authentic and self-aware and maintain our growth in what we've talked about then it's going to make changes along the way. (Post-Interview)

P6, Gwen and P10 reflected upon how, as parents, they are in a position to advocate and take further action by reaching out to other parents as story-tellers and influential change-makers:

P6: I think parents like us can be advocates and share their experiences with other parents to encourage them to be involved. I resolve to make an effort to get more parents involved or even aware of what goes on in and around the school (journal entry, nd).

Gwen: I talk to my friends about it, I explain it and I talk to them and I tell them—You know, you matter. Don't just think that you are one person and that if you don't go to school and don't attend meetings—it matters. That's just the beginning if we can start asking questions and shake things up and not just go through our days in our habits—but get out of our habits and talk to new people. I think we have to be storytellers. We just have to share our stories a bit more and before this year, we've had some very challenging experiences in school and we never did anything about them. We've gotta keep telling our stories about what this has done for us and how it's a part of us and how we can have great conversations with people for our little people. (Post-Interview)

P10: When we think about small groups and how we can make a difference I think one key aspect comes to mind. As leaders we are setting an example to learn and follow. We may not think it is doing much but it plants a seed for others to grow from as we never always see or grasp the changes happening around us. (Journal Entry, April 26)

P10 also followed up with a later email to me at the beginning of the following school year describing her strong sense of purpose in taking up productive action as she found herself within a new home-school interface:

I have started the new school year strong taking action based on what we have learned together in our group meetings. I am happy that things look very positive this year and we have a great team of support in place for my boys which I very much feel a respected part of :). Here's to building amazing home/school connections and spreading the movement!! (September 14)

Change involves confronting the way things are and insists on shifting the way things become. Critical participatory action research invites people to think critically, to question



everyday life, to expose the contradictions they live by, and to take action that makes change in their world (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Kemmis, et al., 2014). As a consequence, different possibilities are born and new expectations emerge. New futures are imagined and created. The way the world is perceived is directly related to the way it is acted upon. Changing the way the world is understood alters behaviour within the world. New stories are written. As understandings grow within complex interrelationships, the potential for co-creating a world based on multiple ways of knowing is revealed. This research process inspired participants to imagine their own concentric circles of hope and change for a better world.

What is most notable about the ripple effect as a theme is that it surfaced predominantly among parent participants. In the first phase of the research study, these parent participants were interested and confident in how they had positioned themselves within the home-school interface. After five months these same voices demonstrated a transformative sense of increased self-determination and self-regulated agency reflective of "people in the task of making their own history" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 598).

#### **4.21 Discursive Transformations: Voice, Agency, and Empowerment**

In keeping with the metaphor of rippling and as part of the transformative nature of critical participatory action research using the process of conscientization, more defined voice, stronger agency and empowerment surfaced discursively among all twenty-five participants in their post-inquiry interviews. Participants spoke of locating and identifying themselves more meaningfully, with more clarity and a revised sense of purpose and identity within the home-school interface. In both the pre- and post-inquiry interviews, participants were asked to describe what they believed their role was within the home-school interface. Pre- and post-inquiry parent responses are recorded in conversation with each other:

P5: Strong support system for our kids and assistance for our kids at home—a backup.

Anything the teacher needs, we're happy to try and work it out. (Pre-Interview)

P5: Moving forward I won't be afraid to pursue a more personal relationship with my child's teacher. (Post-Interview)

P8: Our job is to support what's going on in the classroom, as parents. (Pre-Interview)

P8: I feel like at least now I know I can be part of it. A part of the conversation and I can be involved if it helps. Just bring in more—like valuing the parents and their knowledge of the student. I think I now know more the value of it [my knowledge]. The value of connecting and also the giving of the knowledge about the student. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: Back up for the teacher—supporting the teacher is key to supporting our child at school. I feel like families number one should back up what teachers are doing. (Pre-Interview)

Gwen: I've just had way richer conversations with all three of my boys' teachers this year since February. I have learned about myself that I can communicate very well and with empathy and caring and share my perspective in a way that people can resonate with. I feel I can influence people. Just by who I am and I think before I felt a little bit disillusioned. I feel empowered now. (Post-Interview)

P4: My role is to sort of accompany and sort of be an accompaniment to his learning. Whatever he's learning at school, just to reinforce that at home.....help his learning with doing additional reading, and teaching and instruction at home. (Pre-Interview)

P4: I really want to come alongside you in whatever capacity I'm able to I want to support you and I just want you to know that I'm grateful for what you're doing with him and I

want to know what's going on. I really want to have an open communication and open dialogue with you and that's all that matters. (Post-Interview)

Maleeka: My role is to work with her at home. I like to hear from the teacher always. I always listened to the teacher, I go to her side ... To work with my daughter with her homework, help her at home so she can be present in the classroom . . . . Follow up with the teachers so she is not behind. (Pre-Interview).

Maleeka: That means for me I can do the first step. I can start this connection. For me they can tell me what to do—"Yes, yes, okay, okay." But now I discuss if something doesn't . . . I don't like . . . for me I can discuss that or maybe I can refuse this. Before I am just accepting and receiving. (Post-Interview)

P1: I've got three kids and I'm very involved in the education and I'm always trying to stay connected, so experiences have been great. I can really talk to the teachers and they give me a response when I talk to them. (Pre-Interview)

P1: On my interaction because it totally changed my way of looking at things because maybe before I just looked as a parent? Now it's a very big word, but I will use it for myself, but like an educator also. (Post-Interview)

P7: I feel that the teacher and the parents need to work closely together . . . Just to help broaden our children's understanding of the academics as they are being taught. Just to be that support to the teacher versus being a wall. (Pre-Interview).

P7: Next year I can come in and say, "ok, I understand your role, and this is my role." Being able to use that language and to say that we are the connecting and we are team and that we want to foster that team and be there for each other. Had I not been part of

this, I don't think I would have ever realized that I have a bigger voice than I was already giving. (Post-Interview)

P10: My role is follow through and follow-up with my child and say, "Ok this is important and we're going to do our 15 minutes of reading fill it out and send it back." So they can see that it's important at school, but it's important at home, too, that parents follow through. It's a way for the child to continue that learning past the school hours in the evening. (Pre-Interview)

P10: You have to be your child's advocate saying, pushing all the time--this is important to us, this matters, this is what we really want to do together and keep offering your support to show the teacher as well that "I'm here for you and I'm here for the class." I learned I can stand up and say my opinion. (Post-Interview)

P6: To supplement [what's going on in the classroom]. Help out with anything he needs more work on, extra time. (Pre-Interview)

P6: I would like to try and stay involved and I don't know how teachers are going to be receptive to that. I think it's a big part of what the teacher wants, but I would try and encourage that, now that I know it's a possibility and it's beneficial for the child. (Post-Interview)

P9: She's in the playground, or in the school and I am on the fence, watching her and she has the ability to come to me if she gets wayward, or I am there within reach, within sight. But just being close, but not too involved. Allowing her to explore and be there in case and/or of need - support, involvement, time, money. (Pre-Interview)

P9: I will attempt to be more involved as much as possible and make an effort to just be there and make more effort to be involved. I might inquire more and have that relationship [with the teacher]. I think that is important. (Post-Interview)

It is notable that parents prior to engaging in the research study positioned themselves as receivers of information from the teacher and school believing their role to be an extended support system of their children's school work at home. This is in keeping with the historicized and ritualized script by which the players within the home-school interface have become accustomed to living out their roles as explained by Pushor (2012): "The focus is placed on what parents can do to help the school realize its intended outcomes for children, not on what the parents' hopes, dreams, or intentions for their children may be or on what the school can do to help parents realize their personal or family agendas" (p. 467). Voice, agency, empowerment, and enlivened purpose became more evident in the post-inquiry parent participant responses. Similarly, the teacher participants also transformed their perspectives on their role and identity within the home-school interface, as well as how they have (re)positioned roles and expectations of parents and families within that space:

T1: There's been such a wall up...I mean, so many parents don't know what's going on at school and I want them to be part of it because when they are part of what I am doing, and even having conversations with their children or reading to their child. It makes my job easier but it makes a collective instead of him or her against me. You know, we're not opposites. I wish parents and families respected what went on in the classroom. (Pre-Interview)

T1: I think friendship with my parents—so often teachers—my personal and work are separate. By having this experience we've taken our relationships to a more personal

intimate level and it's created a bond between parents and teachers, but has also extended beyond that to the children as well. (Field Notes, June 14)

T7: They come in to pick up their child, parent teacher interviews, emails, agendas, Fresh Grade. All different avenues, figuring out what works for different parents and then making sure they feel connected . . . I think parents should be connecting what they know to what their child is learning and just to kind of make it cohesive. (Pre-Interview)

T7: It just helped me see parents from a different perspective. I'm very young and not a parent, and it can be kind of nerve wracking to be in charge of someone else's child and for their growth and development. ...It was really a growing experience to be more open to different communicative parents and not being fearful of developing those kinds of relationships...That next year, I can start the year, strong with parents. Our united efforts are what is best for all learners. (Journal Entry, June 14)

T10: Making it very, very clear that the school and the home are connected. They're not going to be working sort of parallel, they've got to be working together. Having families engage in that responsibility and also that invitation to be part of their child's success at school. It enables them to feel that they are part of what's going to be happening with their child. It's not just 'Oh, they're going to go to school and what happens at school stays at school and what happens at home stays at home.' That's not the way if you're going to be truly having the child's best interest at heart you need to have that connection with each other. (Pre-Interview)

T10: It's made me more mindful of connections with parents. We're actually going to change things we are going to do now. In the fall we are going to make sure we see the family and the home as important as we are in the education of the child. I want to make

more opportunities for open houses and to have those parents come in not just in the classroom as volunteers, outside of the classroom and the school day. I've got some great ideas. It's made me think more about bringing the families instead of just having that never the twine shall meet. (Field Notes, June 14)

T9: By inviting them in to help with home reading and having them volunteer in any way, inviting them to be part of PAC . . . Following up if there's home reading, reading with your child, doing flashcards with their children. If we're having a behavioral issue that's continual we talk to the families and have them follow up at home talking about what kinds of things they should be doing at home. Parents should understand the reasoning why we send things home for them to reinforce with their children. (Pre-interview)

T9: I've had a lot of struggling parents who just don't have time to come in and meet so I think I'd like to try to create other events that help get parents in for many of them I've only seen them at the beginning of the year and at parent-teacher conferences. I really want to make a network and do more of that next year. (Field Notes, June 14).

T2: The expectation is that at home they do home reading and practice sight words. Home reading and practicing word families. Talking to them about what they're learning and pulling that information out of them because typically kids say I don't know. So find ways to ask questions or pull that information out of them. This is the only thing I expect families to do. I wish parents and families all valued education and learning and understood its importance and the importance of talking about it. (Pre-Interview)

T2: First of all honoring every family for where they are and not expecting them to conform to your idea of what a family should be doing to contribute to their child's

education. Like the home reading program, "Oh well, they didn't do home reading so they must be bad parents," well no. Maybe it's just the way their life is and take the pressure off. Maybe there's other ways that they're contributing and look at different avenues and supporting the how you can in where they're at. Some parents are able to and others want to be, but they can't. My role is to make every family feel like they belong and they're welcome. Not just by saying it, but through my actions. (Post-Interview)

Kim: If there is an issue in the classroom having parents come in for meetings to deal with that. Just keeping the lines of communication open. Asking kids more than just, 'How was school today?' But asking them what they're doing and coming to the student-led conferences if they can or arranging to come if they can't at that time. And seeing me if there are any issues that they're concerned about. Also if there's activities in the class that they want to be involved in . . . so the kids see their parents care and are still concerned. (Pre-Interview)

Kim: To get to know them better and to see things from a parents' perspective and really see where we connect in terms of teachers and parents. Each family is different. It depends on what they can do. Not all parents can be involved in the same way and not all parents are comfortable in being involved in the same way. But the importance of parents knowing that they can be involved if they want to be and involved in a way that they're comfortable doing, but it's also important that they're involved. (Post-Interview)

TC2: Hopefully they're talking with their kids about what's happening at school to learn more about what they're doing and to help them maybe have a positive outlook on school and what they're doing there. (Pre-Interview)



TC2: It's hard sometimes for parents to come into school territory. It might be uncomfortable for them. They might feel like a teacher has more power or is like higher when they're in that environment. It's very important for a teacher to foster a connection with parents. (Post-Interview)

T6: For them it's about getting their kid to school hopefully on time and being able to support them in home reading programs and just with love . . . It's a two way street but I wish that they could find the strength within them to be able to maybe move past some of their fears, for those parents that are having a hard time getting in the door. (Pre-Interview)

T6: It's a relationship and there's a voice on both sides and we really need to honor the families that we're working with, rather than just the teacher having their vision and just really inviting that perspective of family and their values, as well. Teachers still need to initiate it because they're in that role, but now my thinking has changed in how long that power needs to be there. Making that initiation but really putting that effort in constantly inviting families in different ways. (Post-Interview)

TC1: It's important for teachers to take on that role and not just leave it to parents—a lot of parents expect the teacher to take on that role. Sometimes parents can be active and volunteering in the school and sometimes they can't. (Pre-Interview)

TC1: I really like the idea of being able to ask families and parents how they want to support teachers and students—do it with the family, not for the family. I hope that is something I remember and will guide me as a teacher. (Post-Interview)

T11: So many parents don't know what's going on at school. I want them to be part of it because when they are part of what I am doing it makes my job easier, but it makes a

collective instead of him or her against me. You know, we're not opposites. I wish parents and families respected what went on in the classroom. (Pre-Interview)

T11: I think that families do the best that they can based on what tools they have. Just honoring that and moving from there. And take away the judgment. Even though I consider myself a nonjudgmental person, I think that sometimes occasionally we do. Just being very honoring of their backgrounds and what they're bringing to the table and have that much more empathy and understanding. (Post-Interview)

T12: It's really important in the early stages of learning to read having practice at home is important and having the enthusiasm towards reading is really important. I think that the best thing that a family can do for your child in school is just have a positive attitude towards school and a willingness to engage their students in the material that's being covered. I wish parents and families would take a more active interest in their child's education. (Pre-Interview)

T12: Really understanding maybe that they are coming from a place where school wasn't a positive experience, just really opening yourself up to letting them understand that you're there for their child and you're also there to help them, to lean on. To show them that things can be different. Their experience is not necessarily their child's experience. If it's not working one way, then you try another. Really just being persistent in trying and not necessarily giving up on them, but understanding that maybe at that point they're not at a place where they can make those kinds of changes or make those commitments and not stigmatizing them or their children because of that. (Post-Interview)

Positioning participant quotes from pre and post interviews in conversation with each other echoes Pushor's (2012) contention that: "The school sets the agenda, educators determine

what roles parents are to play within that agenda. The hierarchical structure of educators as experts, acting in the best interests of less-knowing parents, is maintained" (p. 467). Each teacher participant in the post-inquiry interviews shared very different stories in their pre- and post-inquiry reflections. Language shifted from school-centric modes of expectations—"should," "must," "have to," to more relational modes of empathy and unification—"together," "invite," "understanding." Teacher participants in their pre-inquiry interviews called upon the need for more respect and value for what happens at school from parents and families. Transformations in participant Discourse reflected Pushor's (2007) point that: "when these boundaries between school, home, and community become permeable and multidirectional that the creation of a shared world which supports and nurtures children is realized" (p. 6). This new Discourse reflected an openness to understand and work alongside parents and families in ways that best accommodated their situated lifeworlds. Family-centeredness means positioning parents and teachers on the "same side of the table joined in support of the child, coordinated in their efforts to problem solve and open in their expression of needing each other" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 243). This transformation of language among the participants from pre-inquiry to post-inquiry truly reflected the principles of family-centered practice (Epley, et al., 2010; Keyser, 2006; McWilliam et al., 1999). Ledwith and Springett (2014) suggest that:

Hegemony is only maintained through the collective will of the people, therefore the development of a counter-hegemony, a different way of making sense of the world, plays an essential part in the process of change—through cyclic process of reflection and action which is the crux of critical education (p. 160).

Ledwith & Springett (2014) also remind us that "as we begin to see the world in different ways, we begin to change how we act in the world" (p. 24). Praxis, according to Freire, is within

the capacity of humans to engage in authentic action and reflection upon their world in order to transform it. Humans are called to be re-creators, not mere spectators of the world, and are called to transform it—and thereby transform themselves (Freire, 1976). Participants all entered the research process possessing perspectives and a stance that reflected the lived reality within which they found themselves (Freire, 1976). Living within *communitas*, experiencing liminality and conscientization helped participants (re)orient who they are with others while restructuring their identities within imagined and actual social practices (Wiebe et al., 2017). Disrupting to transform a shared world - a living praxis.

#### **4.22 Becoming Critical: Questioning and Problematizing the Status Quo**

Becoming critical, developing a questioning approach to practice, challenges the taken-for grantedness of everyday life. Attitudes that have been sold to us as “common sense” no longer make any sense at all, and we begin to see beneath surface-level symptoms that often distract practice to discover an interconnected network of power relations that create inequalities....Participatory practice begins in lived reality, in our being in the world. And it is questioning this everyday practice that leads to changed understandings (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p.13).

P6 and P8 and in their post-inquiry interviews took up a critical perspective by questioning the lack of questioning of what has been historically taken-for-granted within the home-school interface:

P6: Unless you know it [mesosystem] exists because I came into the school and thought this is the way things are and we didn't even think that way. [People] don't question why we do things enough—it's just easier to go along. It's the status quo. (Post-Interview)

P8: You think they're going to be the same as they were when you went to school. And they are! The change is a snail's pace. You have the old teacher who mentors the young teacher who basically hands down the same ideology. Even at work we do that all the time –we question why we do what we do. (Post-Interview)

Through processes of conscientization over time, participants engaged with their lived experience stories as a means to challenge, question and disrupt practices that were embedded in their habitual ways of being within the home school interface. Methods of engagement and communication structures were both questioned and challenged, then reimagined.

#### **4.22.1 Rules of engagement.**

During pre-interviews participants were asked to describe how they were accustomed to interacting with each other within the home-school interface. Participants typically described the traditional institutional structural approaches (Kim & Sheridan, 2015) and events that formally call upon teachers and parents to connect home and school. For example:

T1: At the beginning of the year we had a meet and greet almost like an open forum.

T2: The PAC has a barbecue and there's play day where families and siblings can come. We have an open house first week of school where parents are welcome to come and parent-teacher conferences.

T6: At parent-teacher conferences, at IEP meetings. After school activities like family barbecue night, dad's pumpkin carving, Mother's Day tea, and pancake breakfasts.

Gwen: The teachers have all started using Fresh Grade and most of them post on a weekly basis. Christmas concerts, student-led conferences, myself by volunteering - making popcorn, doing crossing guards, helping out with staff luncheon, morning or after school meetings.

P6: I went to parent-teacher interviews, we get a monthly newsletter with what they're working on, we volunteer in a class, we read with kids.

Structures, events and methods of communication that represent the traditional benchmarks of how home and school ought to connect are familiar to anyone who has lived a role within the school landscape. Brien and Stelmach (2009) suggest these practices assume "a homogeneous parent population who willingly accept and comply with hetero-normative expectations" of the school (p. 4).

Critical participatory action research aims to help people question, understand and transform the taken-for-granted ways in which they have become accustomed to living together—in this case within the home-school interface (Kemmis et al., 2014). At the conclusion of the research process, participants through "new eyes" questioned the status quo and challenged some of the institutionalized, ritualized and hetero-normative practices of the system that continues to perpetuate the rules within the space of engagement:

T6: We have the policies of meeting parents and like a minimum of a certain number of times a year or we're reporting to them, but it's not necessarily like talking with families—it's always just within a structure that we're creating, and we're putting them in a box of: "Ok, this is when you need to come and this is when we talk and then see you in four months!" (Post-Interview)

T1: You think you have these positive relationships with families—you say hi at the door and everybody's all smiles, but they don't often go deeper than that. You have open houses, parent teacher conferences, maybe the odd phone call home and that was what we did to engage with families or connect with families and after this experience it's going above and beyond those expectations. In our contract these are the things we're expected

to do to make connections with our families, but what can I do above and beyond that so that I'm creating a comfortable environment for parents to come into? (Post-Interview)

Kim: The traditional fifteen-minute conference times 30 families over two nights. I don't know which child belongs to which family, what the issues are so I have to watch or not watch. (Field Notes, March 2)

Gwen: [Home-school connection] it's so messed up. It's just completely disingenuous. We're getting parents to come in to do ridiculous things and it's meaningless. We're doing things just because they've always been done that way. We don't do parent-teacher interviews at our school anymore, we don't have sit down with the teacher. They do this other thing. So we actually never get one-one-one conversation with our teachers unless we book something. (Post-Interview)

T10: It's just being mindful of involving more families on a regular basis and changing what that looks like—it's not just having parent-teacher interviews, it's not just concerts, field trips. It's sort of having more open houses and a very relaxed casual kind of opportunity for parents to come to school and for the kids to showcase what they feel is important in their learning. That's sort of a whole mindset of its own. You know there are other people in education that think that it's just play times that a parent should come to school and I think you have to be more open to realize seizing those opportunities. (Post-Interview)

T9: I feel that when our principal is suggesting things, it's more formal, unnatural. 'Ok, we're going to have a day where everybody's going to have their room open.' Whereas I feel it should be a personal thing. Not necessarily showcasing science or this or that. But the teacher doing what's comfortable for them and inviting parents in. (Post-Interview)

T11: Why in elementary can we not 'rejig' schedules occasionally so that parents can participate? School is not family-centered. School is judgmental. (Journal Entry, April 5).

#### **4.22.2 Communication structures.**

Participants also questioned school-centric (Pushor, 2017) Discourse and communication structures, practices and styles that have been institutionalized and taken-for-granted. Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) describe this phenomenon as "patterns of communication lodged in an established social order" (p. 92). T2 in her post interview detailed how communication tends to be unidirectional: "There's the online beeper which goes out, the online newsletter. It is just that type of communication *at* them, not really *with* them." P9 referred to his experience with school communication as "...one-sided with the communication. Dictating this linear teaching. I'm setting it up . . . you're either on board or you get thrown away" (P9, Field Notes, June 14). Gwen questions the efficacy of the traditional parent-teacher interview structure: "The parent-teacher 10-minute interview is not the best. It's a firing squad. What are some other ways—other events to get to know families?" (B.Ed. class presentation, October 16).

P5 in her post-inquiry interview wondered about the efficacy of generic group emails sent from the school:

We get beautiful emails every week from the school. But for me a lot of the time, they don't really say enough. Its little bullet points and you don't really ever know necessarily unless you are more connected. Unless you take that step to be connected. How does this affect my child? Is my child even involved in this thing? (Post-Interview)

T3 in her post-inquiry interview described a situation of critically attending to Discourse and confronting hidden assumptions of positional power in a written communication meant to be sent home to parents:



The other day a teacher had given out a notice to parents and kind of asked me, "Does this look ok?" I got a pit in my stomach and I knew in that moment that this is not the relationship we should be setting with parents. Parents are partners in our education of the child, and for us to be almost in this dominant position to tell parents, No, no, no. That to me is not what we should be sending. Then they wonder why they don't want to come and communicate with us. It's because that's the tone that we're sending. I think that's what I've taken from this—that our relationship with parents is in a different lens. (Post-Interview)

T11 challenged herself in her post-inquiry interview to consider more inclusive and invitational language when communicating with parents and families:

I will really think carefully about how I word things and how I propose things. Events or activities in the classroom—I would like it to be more participatory so that the parents feel like it's their place of learning, as well. Like we're working together for a common goal.

T1 in her post-inquiry interview challenged herself to flatten the institutionalized hierarchy inherent in how communication occurs within the home-school interface:

I think it's really working with parents to . . . not just sending report cards home, but working with them day to day, week to week to really have them help me as a teacher so that I can help their children more. It's really just kind of breaking down all those barriers and not having home and school being above. Like the teacher being above home but it means that we're all working together. (Post-Interview)

T2, T5 and T12 all recognized that in order to disrupt the institutionalized codes of behavior and formalized rules of engagement, it is ultimately up to the classroom teacher to

create the conditions for reciprocity in communication with parents and families that are within their circle of immediate influence:

T2: Typical practice on the first day at my school is for the parents to drop off their children to their new classroom...They are not typically invited to remain in the classroom on the first day. I am now questioning this practice. I wonder if a more welcoming approach would help to set the tone for the year. The tone being one that tells families: "You are welcome, appreciated, important and a partner in the education and school experience of your child." Going forward, my thoughts are, that instead of turning my students' families away on the first day I will invite them in and ask them to stay as long as they wish. (Journal Entry, n.d.)

T5: I always felt like I was about having families as part of the child's education, but it took me into a different level of thinking about it, where it's not about me the teacher creating something and then offering it to families, it's about how can we create it together? How can the families coming in and creating it together offer something different? That I'm not the only one that has the good idea, "Oh, let's have parents in and do this, it's that: How can we do it together?" (Post-Interview)

T12: It's on the teacher to really take initiative by inviting the parents in and opening up your classroom to them you create those strong relationships and not just relying on administration or the school community, but really fostering your own and creating your own community. (Post-Interview)

Through the research process participants engaged in questioning and challenging the assumptive power within the taken-for-granted structures and practices of how school engages with home that they had discussed in their pre-inquiry interviews. Much in keeping with the

intent and spirit of critical inquiry, critical participatory action research provides access for participants that raises their consciousness to enable them to realize that they do have more voice in matters that mean most to them in their world (Creswell, 2013).

#### **4.23 "The Ripple Effect Will Come"**

Phase four of the research study tells the story of how participants as a result of the research experience transformed their identities, Discourse, world view and positioning within the home-school interface. Phase four is a culmination of the other three phases, as well as a glimpse into a possible future for the participants as they moved out into their respective worlds. Positioned together within third space as inquirers and learners, they became united, "positioned to look inside themselves and outside at the system...invited to see the world of the child in the middle, straddling home and school" (Cremin & Mottram, 2015, p. 172). P7 in the post-interview anticipated that: "The ripple effect will come." In keeping with the action phase of conscientization where critical consciousness is raised and questions lead to action, participants experienced transformed perspectives leading to ripples of revised relationships within the home-school interface in the future. Transformations of personal being and empathetic relating are important outcomes of participatory research and such outcomes are validated through "living repercussions and ripples, even if there are no written or presentational outcomes of any kind" (Heron & Reason, 2013, p. 370).

Through inductive analysis of participant's post-interviews, journal reflections, and field notes from research gatherings, and illustrated metaphorically by the image of ripples, three themes emerge from the fourth phase of the research study:

1. Moving forward: Creating ripples through connection
2. Discursive Transformation: voice, agency, empowerment

3. Becoming critical: Questioning and problematizing the status quo- rules of engagement and communication structures.

Participants together over time engaged in critical consciousness that first helped them locate themselves in the lived home school interface, then propelled them into seeing themselves as possiblizers and change-makers (Schnellert et al., 2015). Guarjardo, Guajardo, and Casaperalta, (2008) summarize this process further: "Giving people in liminal spaces the power to see themselves not as consumers of information and data, but rather as researchers and creators of knowledge" (p. 17), which ultimately is the goal of participatory research.

#### **4.24 Summary**

This findings chapter answers the research question: How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants impact the interface relations between home and school? The remaining two research questions about literacy development and curriculum enrichment will be answered in the next chapter.

Findings in this chapter focused on telling the narrative of our participatory research process using the metaphoric language derived from participant data. Four metaphors represent the constituent phases of the research process. Each of the four representational phases are further elaborated through categories or themes that give further insight into implications about the nature and possibilities that live within a relational home-school interface.

Within the overarching theoretical construct of relational approaches (Kim & Sheridan, 2015) to home-school connections, four broad theoretical concepts represented metaphorically as door, tapestry, bridge and ripples surfaced to help tell a deeper story about what it means to co-create a relational home-school interface. Doors represents the preexisting assumptions that participants carried with them into the research process where their roles, positionalities and

rules of engagement were based on colonial hierarchical institutionalized Discourses. Tapestry represents manifestations of the participants experiencing *communitas* and liminality where their previous socially designated roles and positionalities were set aside enabling new ways of being, relating, and learning with each other. Bridge as an overarching metaphor represents more individual manifestations of how barriers (as described in phase one—"door") can stand in the way of mobility and free passage while bridges can "open safe connections to places which earlier may have been unknown because they were not accessible" (Skrefsrud, 2016, p. 139). Finally, ripples as an overarching metaphor represents a glimpse into the future beyond the research *communitas* and signals transformations among participants in how they have critically repositioned themselves within the home-school interface as generative agents of change.

Participants in the research process came to determine that they each had cultural and social resources that equally contributed to their greater knowledge creation together. They lived what Ledwith and Springett (2014) describe as: "Re-experiencing life from a participatory paradigm opens our minds to notions of multiple truths and a more holistic way of making sense of the world" (p. 196). Third space over time provided opportunities to disrupt the taken-for-grantedness of former lived practices into contested sites of possibilizing future ways of being and belonging (Schnellert et al., 2015). Participants expressed confidence and agency in their abilities to move forward and inhabit future spaces where home and school connect with the interest, desire and motivation to change their stories, for in changing their little stories, they just might effect change on their bigger world.

## **Chapter 5: Findings II**

### **5.1 Creating a Literacy of Each Other**

This critical participatory action research study generated an abundant amount of data to discuss the two other research questions about implications for curriculum enrichment in the teacher participants' classrooms: How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants:

- foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; and,
- enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participant's classrooms?

Phase one of the research (door) established the boundaries and borderlands that described the home-school interface as experienced and known to be familiar from the perspectives of the teacher and parent participants. Phase two (tapestry) helped participants reimagine the potentialities that live within a reinvigorated and regenerated home-school interface where they renegotiated roles, identities, expectations and rules of engagement with others. Phase three (bridge) reflects participants moving inward into more of an individual perspective of examining their own role and what it means to be in relation with others in the home-school interface. Phase four (ripples) represents participants emerging beyond the research as critically conscious change-makers moving forward into their own respective futures.

In order for participants to reach a place where their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development could be integrated and curriculum could be enriched within teacher classrooms, the interface relations between teachers and parents needed to first be nurtured through the creation of a safe discursive space. Phase two of the research, illustrated through the visual image of a tapestry established the conditions for participants to take up

conversational topics about children's learning, multi-literacies, and ways of inviting and including funds of knowledge into the lived curriculum of the teacher participant's classrooms. Phase three of the research represented how participants within research clusters began to “bridge” their respective funds of knowledge together to imagine how curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms might be enriched as a result of their tapestraic third space experiences with each other. Creating the tapestry canvas together, helped to further epitomize and make visually permanent the multi-voiced research experience.

Through reading and coding the post-inquiry interviews, journal reflections, research gathering field notes, the visual canvas artifact and school site visit field notes, a quote from T10's journal glimmered and "glowed," (MacLure, 2013, p. 661) and like the visual tapestry, is an insightful synthesis of our transformative research journey together. T10 in her journal reflected upon the discussions of literacies in the research gathering:

Literacies at homes/families/school when expressed and valued create a literacy of each other - something that connects binds us together and reinforces the natural flow of sets of values/histories/traditions between each important segment of our lives. (May 17)

This reflection nudged my thinking and engagement with the data to further determine themes and categories that responded to questions of the meaning of literacy, children's literacy development, and enriching lived curriculum within the teacher participants' classrooms. Six themes resulted: (re)imagining literacy learning; "just value kids' literacies"; "being open to each other's literacies"; enriching curriculum through tapestraic literacy events; and, diversity strengthens relational spaces.

## 5.2 (Re)imagining Literacy Learning

During the fourth research gathering on May 17, participants were invited to consider literacy as a sociocultural construct representing personal knowledge and how we interact with each other and texts within everyday communicative practices. Literacies represent our cultural, historical and linguistic resources from our lifeworld and during our research gatherings, we came to know each other better through the personal resources we shared through storying and dialoguing. In doing so we echoed Greene's (1995) belief that literacy is a door to personal meaning or a way to create literacies of each other.

In sharing our funds of knowledge, I provided participants with three visuals (see Figures 6, 7, 8) that framed literacy through a socio-cultural lens separating school literacies and literacies of families. These visuals prompted storying, dialoguing, problematizing and questioning among the smaller research clusters.

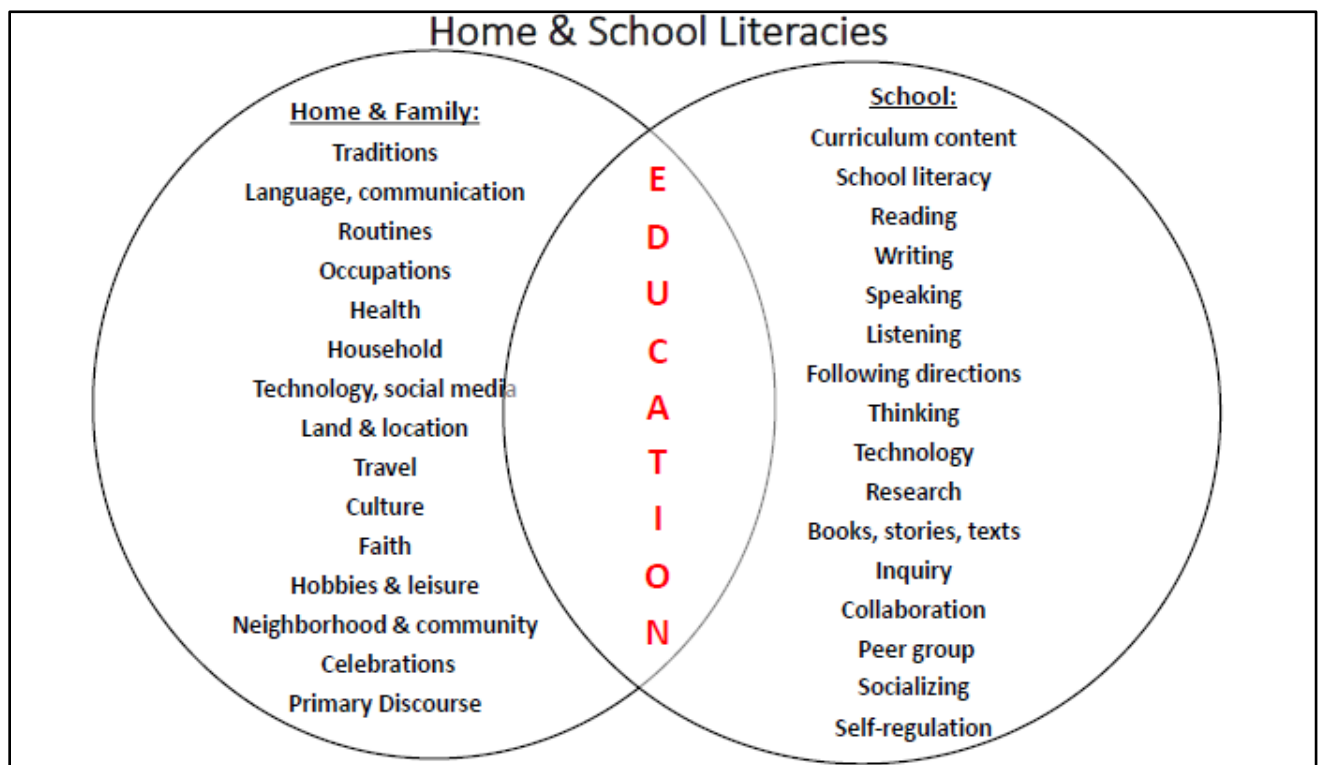


Figure 6. Home and school literacies.



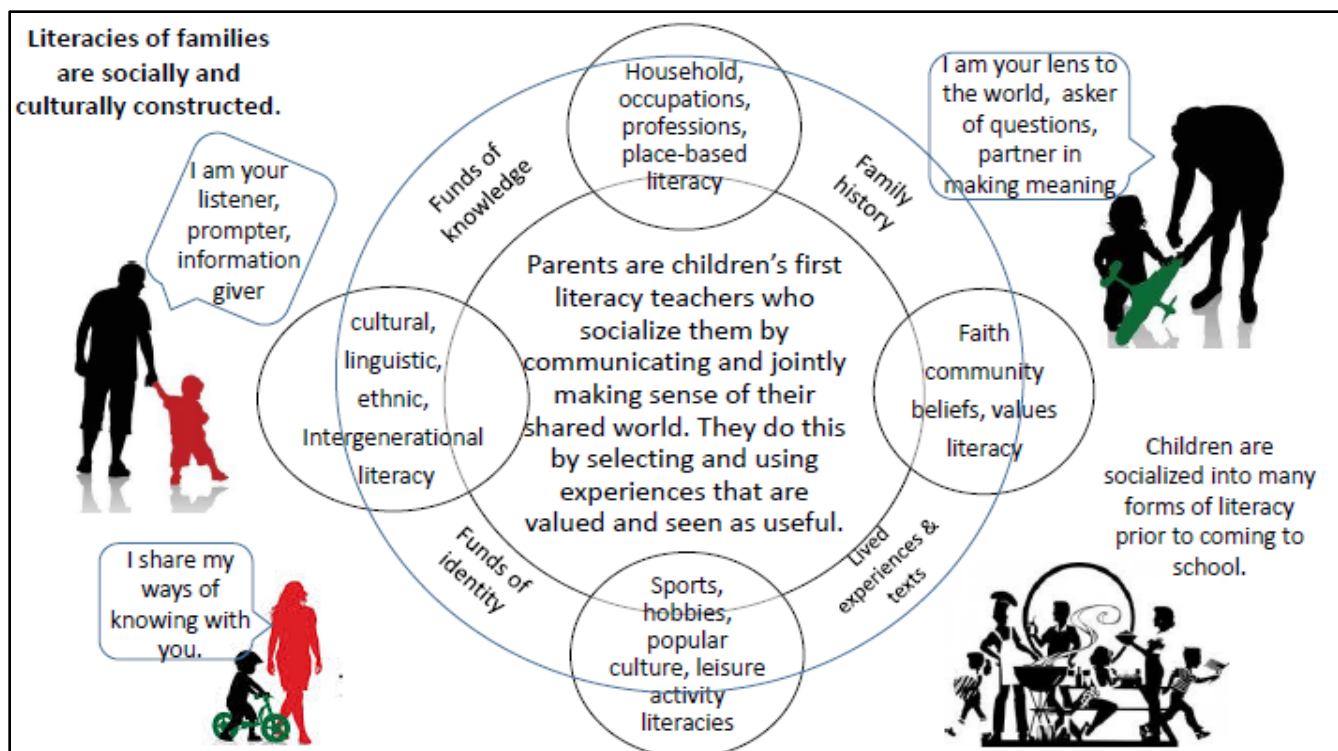


Figure 7. Literacies of families.

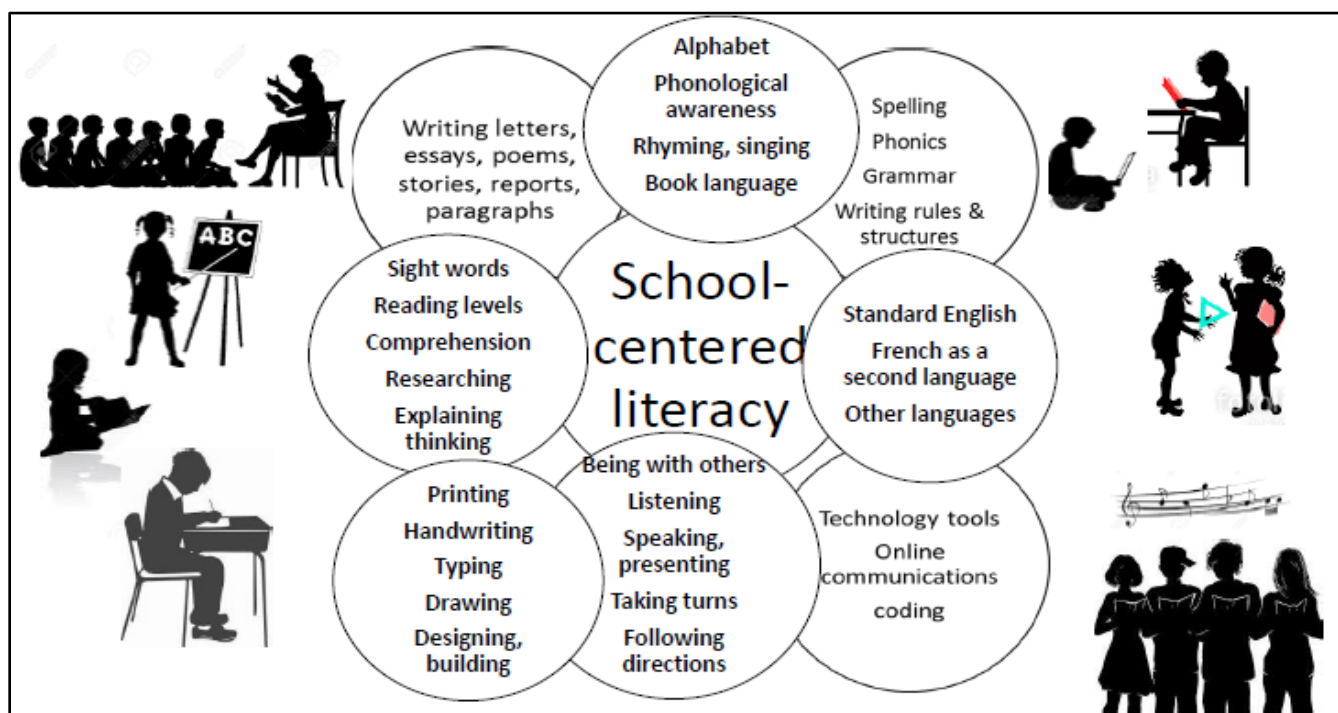


Figure 8. School-centered literacy.

Participants were then given several questions to consider in their smaller research clusters. The following two questions provided the most discussion as reflected in the participant recorded field notes:

*What literacies shaped your ways of knowing as a child?*

Bedtime stories, volunteering in classroom (parent), cabin and lake experiences, camping, family dinners, baking, hobbies, parent occupations, went to work with parent, planted garden, pets, community activities, sports. (Participant Field Notes, May 17)

*How can children's life experiences, literacies and knowledge be used to enrich their school literacy learning?*

- Both have to be on the same page for it to be enriching to that child.
- If the teacher understands the values of home/family, then the child feels connected.
- Both sides can give a little for each side to realize that we all care about the child and are there for the same purpose.
- We liked the idea of doing some work with the class and family around beliefs and inviting families in to collaborate around this.
- Seeing a mark on the report card that surprised her [mom] (related to his writing). Son is now bringing home writing and Mom gave topic ideas to the teacher and the school supported him.
- What do families value? (Some go on big vacations, some do little camping trips).
- "Bleeding heart" story that stemmed from talking about the signs of spring. The mom sent in photos from their backyard and it ended up being a [literacy] center in the classroom.

- Incidental learning is so important (no planning, natural, authentic) (Participant Field Notes, May 17).

The questions were also used by some participants to later reflect and write in their journals:

*How can home-school connections support children's literacy learning?*

P7: Being open to each other's literacies—we can listen with an open mind and have open-ended conversations. (Journal Entry, May 17)

*What literacies shaped your ways of knowing as a child?*

T7: The literacies that shaped me as a child were being outdoors, camping, fishing, hiking and exploring all with family. As an adult, I have come to love and appreciate these literacies as they have shaped who I am now. Knowing how important my literacies have been to me allows me to put vital importance on the literacies of those who enter our learning community. (Journal Entry, May 17)

*How can children's life experiences, literacies and knowledge be used to enrich their school literacy learning?*

Gwen: I absolutely loved the story from [T10] about [P5] bringing in the topic “signs of spring” and the connections it made to her kindergarteners' homes and family stories. That was powerful to me as I know it's a memory created that a child wouldn't forget (Journal Entry, May 17).

T2 and T3 in their post-inquiry interviews described their shifts in thinking experienced around literacy development, literacy pedagogy and literacy learning:

T2: That was like . . . whoa! The light bulb went on. I mean until then literacy to me was reading and writing and speaking. I had no idea I had that all-encompassing view of

literacy to have experiences they have—family experiences or life experiences. That's all literacy! I was blown away by that. (Post-Interview)

T3: What I learned was school literacies and home literacies and they're both so important and how together is how we can help the child. They're not separate, but yet they fit together. They each offer a literacy. So many of the kids come in with their own strengths in terms of literacy. Just because they maybe can't read the words on a page doesn't mean that they aren't coming in with the most beautiful oral stories from either their culture or a grandparent that they've heard. Our ELL students . . . English to them is not their first language but they're coming in with their own type of literacy. How do we bring that out? Like different ways that might help them express their knowledge that doesn't necessarily have to be paper-pencil. (Post-Interview)

During the May 17 research gathering, T7 shared her thinking about how understanding one's own biases and assumptions is another form of literacy that helps shapes one's identity and world view:

T7: Being aware of what your literacies are. You need to know what those are to influence and shape—knowing and reflecting on what those literacies are and acting positively and just being aware how others . . . just like we picked up things from our parents. (Field Notes, May 17)

T5 and TC2 in their post-interviews wondered about how seeing literacies through a different lens might contribute to enriching and expanding interactions within the home-school interface:

T5: I even sometimes use the term funds of knowledge with my family. Once you learn it you see all opportunities . . . When I talk to my own children or when I talk to my

children's friends and families and suggest they share their literacies at school and they ask, "Can I do that?" (Post-Interview)

TC2: Getting to know where families come from and allowing the kids to bring in their literacies from home so that those can be fostered and we're not all just doing the same thing—learning about our families and bringing it to school so that we can learn about it. (Post-Interview)

Kim talked about how her perspective on what literacy means during the May 17 research gathering: "I am shifting my perspective on literacy changing from reading and writing. How to weave it into the classroom to make it more authentic and show children you value and connect and also share our literacies." T2 also shared during the same gathering: "Just value kids' literacies. Remember they're all coming from different places."

T1 and T7 in their post-inquiry interviews further reflected on how their re-conceptualized understanding of literacies will influence how they shape curriculum to incorporate the literacies and funds of knowledge that children bring with them to school:

T1: I would always think of literacies as reading, writing, oral language. There's so many more levels and layers that you don't think of under the umbrella of literacies. You look at diverse family units and there's some children whose parents are maybe going to be really supportive and have the time to bring that stuff into the classroom and there are going to be times where the kid is in an after school care program and they're not home a lot with mom, but they still have those funds of knowledge they can share. It's going to be trying to figure out how everybody feels valued in sharing knowledge. (Post-Interview)

T7: I think it's important to support and to encourage and to build up the literacies that they have at home and to encourage them to grow their new literacies that they're

experiencing at school. I think before my literacies definitely shaped who I was and I think I looked at literacies from my very narrow lens. Family is important and appreciating what's around you and the gift that the land is or your place. Those are the things that are really important to me, but I think it helped me to broaden my view of what literacies actually are and to broaden my understanding of the different literacies that children bring into the classroom. I think it helped foster some practices that allow children to delve into those literacies deeper as opposed to forcing my literacies upon them. (Post-Interview)

Much like Pushor (2009) describes, participants began to think in terms of inviting children to bring their lives and their families to school, to help move away from educators isolated within the walls of the school to "attend to lives and learning as 'nested' (Lyons, 1990)—nested in families and communities...nested in ways that both shape and are shaped by what we do in schools" (p. 154). It was not until well into the research process during our fourth gathering before attention could be focused on children's literacy learning in the participant's conversations with each other. Over time participants had reached an opening within their state of *communitas* where pedagogical conversations were enacted liminally and where barriers of role and positionality no longer took up space within the Discourse. P7 reflected upon this in her journal: "Being open to each other's literacies—we can listen with an open mind and have open-ended conversations" (May 17). Participation is emphasized in critical participatory action research through communicative action in which people strive for intersubjective agreement about the ideas and the language they use, mutual understanding of one another's perspectives and points of view (Kemmis, et al., 2014). Relationships are established within communicative hybrid spaces or borderlands in which people can think openly, respectfully and critically

together to explore whether there may be better ways of conducting their current practices. It appears that the research community needed to first create a literacy of each other by fostering trusting and caring interface relations (*communitas*) over the course of four research gatherings as a foundation from which to safely move storying and dialoguing into children's literacy development and learning, as well as problematizing how this could translate into enriching the lived curriculum within classrooms.

### **5.3 "Just Value Kids' Literacies"**

Opening up spaces that acknowledge and appreciate children and their families as benefactors of literacies and diverse knowledges gives way to unrealized curricular possibilities. Along with confronting a new lens for understanding literacy, participants also took up how nurturing the home-school interface could also enrich the lived curriculum in their children's classrooms. Funds of knowledge as a concept was first introduced to participants during the first research gathering on March 2. They were invited to bring artifacts that represented their background, culture, family, childhood or identity as a way to learn about each other. Funds of knowledge as a conceptual framework became an integral part of the research community's Discourse that permeated throughout their ongoing storying, dialoguing and reflections. As Gwen wrote in her journal on June 24: "We need to get to know each 'family's fund of knowledge' and use it to inspire and create learning in the classroom. Each family needs to be represented within the classroom walls."

The resources or funds of knowledge that children bring with them as they navigate between their simultaneous home and school learning spaces, provide multiple pathways to literacy as articulated by T2 on May 17: "Just value kids' literacies" (Field notes). A permeable curriculum recognizes the varied cultural materials children draw on in learning and finds ways

to enable them to use, reflect upon and build on what they know and who they are (Dyson & Kabuto, 2016; Pahl & Burnett, 2013).

T1, T7, T6, P10 and T12 in their post-inquiry interviews reflected on how funds of knowledge as a concept has opened up their perspectives on the possibilities that live within curriculum design when space is created that attends to what children and families bring to the learning at school:

T1: This understanding that each family is unique and they bring—funds of knowledge. They bring their unique knowledge to the classroom...It's having that adaptability to go with the student's learning that they bring from home whether it's something they've done on the weekend or something that gramma has taught them. Really having that flexibility to shift your teaching so that their knowledge is in the classroom and being shared among students.

T7: Taking into account the interests of your kids and what they do at home, those literacies and bringing in parents and having opportunities where either inside or outside of classroom time where they can experience each other in this kind of environment.

T6: Really looking at those deep personal social competencies and being able to draw out those common themes and reuse our family's knowledge to help bring those alive.

Otherwise, how do we talk about identity when we don't have those opportunities to bring identity in? So really co-creating the experiences with our families. Because we only have one perspective and being able to invite those families in just to create those experiences together.

P10: Putting the families' funds of knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and values as a priority and putting them first. You're looking at more personalized learning approaches,



more ways of bringing the family and the child's voice into the classroom as opposed to the school informing the child what the education is going to look like. That family has an opportunity to collaborate and be more of a team and say, “well this is what the education should look like based on our family. Our family values, our family personal funds of knowledge.”

T12: It means bringing the knowledge from home into school, not just sending the knowledge from school back home and honoring where students are coming from and parents are coming from and the wealth of knowledge that they can bring to the whole experience.

When teachers source children's home lifeworld knowledge as pedagogical resources, they value it both as cultural and educational capital. This contradicts positioning diversity in cultural and social capital as deficient and invites curriculum making based on strengths and assets that children and families bring. The funds of knowledge approach also provides a socio-cultural platform for pedagogy mediating lifeworld to school world while defining students as individuals involved in a larger social existence of which school is only a fragment (Moll, 2014).

T3, T7, T11, and P8 in their post-inquiry interviews all elaborated on how children's lifeworld experiences can be drawn upon as pedagogical resources and educational capital to support their school literacy learning:

T3: I think drawing on kids' experiences and knowledge and their own backgrounds in terms of what I'm doing. Don't start from scratch, but start from what they bring in and go from that and continue the year from there. How you could take a photograph or just a conversation with their family members and really get into a depth of values. I found I

could explore these so much deeper with the involvement of their parents. It's not this is what we do at school, this is what we do at home, but it's just one.

T7: One of my students is from Malaysia. I don't really know much about Malaysian culture or their kinds of different practices just simply because I haven't experienced them. I teach them the skills to be a good writer and what things you can do with our own writing to make it interesting or more clear. But the topic they write about is completely up to them. So for her to be able to share about her experiences in Malaysia and what her family practices are at home like fasting or why she wears a hijab and get to share them with the class is like allowing her to explore her literacies and share them with a community of people she really enjoys being with.

T11: We want children to read because that's really important and what they should be learning in science and what they should learn in social studies. Yet you have a bunch of kids coming to school and they're all hunters or they're on ranches and they have that literacy. How can we honor that and how can we learn more about it? Because I don't know anything about that and there are other kids who don't know anything about that.

P8: We were in the woods on Saturday and he [child] was like I'm going to write in my journal. I'm going to write in my journal about how we saw a moose. He was planning ahead. They're focusing on the things that they know about and are passionate about. To learn the skill instead of writing about something that they have zero interest in.

Attending to diverse narratives and literacies in the classroom would open spaces for a more culturally responsive pedagogy and permeable curriculum recognizing culture as a lens through which individuals experience their world; a vital part of their worldviews and identities (Cremin et al., 2015; Dyson, 2013). To be culturally responsive and strength-focused, would

mean building pedagogical relationships to be able to draw on the funds of knowledge that children and families bring with them and inviting them into the curriculum as holders of knowledge and teachers of their respective lifeworlds. This is counter to the historical dominant plotline of school that privileges children who enter the system with social, cultural and linguistic capital that aligns with that of the curriculum (Cremin et al., 2015; Delpit, 1988, 2006; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 2008; Giroux, 1996; Lareau, 1987; Yosso, 2005). When children arrive at school with language and understanding of literacies that do match those valued by the school, the interface between home and school, dominated by the "authority of the school voice," (Giroux, 1987, p. 14) positions them as culturally deficient. TC2 in her May 17 journal reflection disrupted this dominant institutionalized narrative: "There is so much we can learn from our students and helping them share this at school is important. It is much more valuable and fulfilling to use students' stories and experiences to help guide learning in the classroom."

#### **5.4 "Being Open to Each Other's Literacies"**

T9, T10, and T7 in their post-inquiry interviews shared specific stories about inviting parents and family members of their children into the classrooms as pedagogical resources. They each reflected on how sharing people and their knowledge from a child's lifeworld in a classroom made an impact on his or her self-confidence and agency as a learner within a community:

T9: When parents come in and do whatever they do with children, whether it's the cultural or show sewing or their career, the child whose parent is coming in—there's so much confidence and pride. I think the other children see that child differently in a totally different light.

T10: I had a little girl's aunt who happens to be Chinese come in and talk about Chinese New Year. That child was very meek, mild person. After her aunt came in and spent

some time teaching us some words, she was very different after that. So much more confident and far more verbal with everybody. We all saw a different side to her.

T7: We planned a community unit taking the big ideas and kind of where we wanted to go with it. But then we left a lot of where we would go next to be driven by the literacies that the children were bringing to school. I think this unit has been one that I've been most excited about pretty well all year because of their interest in it. It allowed for opportunities for P9 coming into the classroom and bringing his mom and all these different literacies from his childhood and getting to share those with the class. I think in some small way that effect can be happening for P9's child, or any child whose parent comes in and is the expert in the classroom. It just allows the child to see their parent in a different role.

Similarly, T2 and T12 in their post-inquiry interviews shared their perspectives on how inviting parents and family members into the classroom beyond the traditional role of volunteer helps children to perceive their family and their funds of knowledge differently—as contributing members of a larger community of teachers:

T2: When we study the community, I want to put out a letter to parents and say, "Please come and tell us about your role in the community." Just finding ways to bring parents in—in a different way from just the helper parent. You know to be the person who helps the kids explore and think about themselves and others.

T12: Really inviting people in to share their experience with the classroom and helping to guide them to understand how to best present those things and really collaborating with them to share some of the knowledge that they might have and bring in that I even don't

have. Just for the students to see that there's all of these resources in the world for them to draw upon not just their teachers and not just their parents.

Bringing together the literacies and home lifeworld funds of knowledge into classrooms builds valuable bridges between the worlds of home and school as reflected in P7's May 17 journal reflection about realizing the potential in "being open to each other's literacies." Ada and Campoy (2004) agree and add: "Unless students feel that the two worlds of home and school understand, respect, and celebrate each other, they will feel torn between the two . . . and can easily internalize shame about their parents, their families, and their culture" (p. 32).

Kim as a guest speaker in a B.Ed. diversities class post-inquiry offered her perspective on the possibilities that live within a permeable curriculum that attends to the lifeworlds of those who inhabit it:

I want diversity to be celebrated in my classroom and taken up. I want parents invited into the classroom. I sent home a questionnaire to learn from their perspective—it gives parents a chance to tell their story. I invite parents to come in and share their own life stories. Every child is valued. (October 16 presentation)

## **5.5 Enriching Curriculum through “Tapestraic” Literacy Events**

Tapestry, as a metaphor, became a way of articulating the experience of diverse voices coming together within the research third space over time. Stories from lived experiences wove together to create new knowledge pathways, understandings and discourse. Kincheloe (2008) elaborates further by saying that recognizing and celebrating differences can contextualize learning that respects the being and experiences students bring to their learning creating a classroom as a place for acknowledging and encouraging multiple forms of knowing and knowledge (Kincheloe, 2008). Building upon the tapestraic experience of our research

communitas led to intentional curriculum shaping activities within five out of eight research clusters. Five teacher and parent clusters co-created and participated together in specific curricular literacy events during the course of the research process. These events intentionally sought to bring children's life and school worlds together, while supporting and strengthening their school literacy skill development.

### **5.5.1 Event 1: Writing values books in grade 3.**

During the May 17 research gathering, T1 described a writing task for her grade 3 class that invited conversations at home which in turn supported literacy skill development at school:

We started a conversation at school about what our values are. Do they come from home; where did your parents learn their values from? At home the kids with their parents went through pictures to find those that represent their values. The conversations they had at home, the memories—they got to go back and look through them and then they chose the pictures and wrote about what values. [Payoff] was just seeing their excitement. For these kids to be sharing their pictures, their values to each other. (Field Notes, May 17).

P7 and P10 helped tell the story by reflecting on what this school task was like for them at home:

P7: She loves her [value] book so much she showed her gramma and grandpa. "Here is my values . . . what do you think?" She shows it to anyone who comes over. (Field Notes, May 17)

P10: It was good to look at pictures when he was a baby. Also having a conversation around values and you kind of think they know what that means—sometimes you take it for granted. But then you have a conversation. You have to figure out what the value is. We had a great conversation around that—that was the whole point of the thing. This is our family. Look at all we do in nature, being healthy, being fit and active, so we talked

about what values there are. It was something both of our kids could treasure—not everything makes it into their special drawers, but this did. Sometimes it's one of those things they'll pull out when we're reading together—that will be one of his books he'll read. (Field Notes, May 17)

### **5.5.2 Event 2: Special persons' breakfast in grade 2-3.**

T3 organized a special person's breakfast at the school for families in her grade 2-3 classroom:

We did this [breakfast] for special people—this is one of my special people right here [P1]. Some of them [children] don't have moms, have two moms, some have one dad, just grandparents so we just had a special person. The kids wrote a toast to that person and prepared them. I collaborated with another teacher and we ended up having 114 people [for breakfast]. We invited parents and family members. The kids helped us set the tables, tablecloths, made center pieces. On that day P1's daughter and another child wrote a speech welcoming. We introduced everyone and parents had a chance for their child to read their toast to them. (Field Notes, May 17)

P1 read the toast her child had written and presented to her during the breakfast event. This is an excerpt from it:

Best of all my mom loves to study and teach. You'd be surprised to know my mom takes care of me so much. My mom always helps me work with my studies, helps me pick up my suitcase when we travel....Sometimes my mom is thoughtful because she takes care of me and loves me no matter what. (P1: I didn't know my child knows me so well). (Field Notes, May 17).

### **5.5.3 Event 3: Exploring family and community history in grade 1-2.**

T7 shared in her journal on May 25 about P9 coming to the classroom to share his and his family's funds of knowledge as part of the curriculum exploring how their community had changed over time:

Today the parent of a student came in with their mother to explore some of the literacies they knew growing up about life in the Okanagan. The student's eyes were alight with curiosity and pride to be sharing their family with their peers. Not only did they get to learn more about their heritage, their story, but they also got to experience their parent (and grandparent) in a new light—as a teacher. This shared life experience added to our learning community's understanding of our local community and how it has changed/evolved over time by providing a real world example to anchor and extend their learning. So powerful. For me, for the student, the parent and the rest of the learners, to share such connected learning.

P9 reflected upon the experience from his perspective in his child's classroom:

It was enlightening to see how interested they were in history and my daughter—how intrigued she was to learn so I could see how looking at those pictures—we go back to find out and investigate the true values and what they do what they do and what they learn and why. It's overlooked in the classroom sometimes—it's very important to make connections with school. (Field Notes, June 14). (See Figure 9).





*Figure 9.* Sharing family funds of knowledge.

#### **5.5.4 Event 4: Honoring special people breakfast in grade 4-5.**

T11 also organized a special person breakfast with her class:

The kids that weren't able to have somebody present, brought artifacts, pictures and one boy dressed up and he had his dad's kind of fire-fighting gear on. They were just so proud to read their speeches. Even before the event happened in my classroom, I said maybe just practice and I did speech writing as sort of the format. They were "When we're reading our speeches," and they wanted to share. They were so excited and I had children that struggle with "reading" literacy—school literacy because it was something that they created, it was mind blowing how they were able to articulate what they felt. (Post-Interview). (See Figure 10).



Figure 10. Special persons' breakfast.

### 5.5.5 Event 5: Reading lifeworld experiences through photos in kindergarten.

T10 shared a curriculum enrichment event that occurred when P5 sent in photos to school from their families' lifeworld experiences so her child could share her family funds of knowledge with her peers:

P5 sent me pictures on email from their backyard of signs of spring in their garden/yard. She sent me 4 photographs of blossoms on their fruit trees, garden crocuses, birds. So I said during choices you [P5's child] are going to be a center, so the kids came and she just talked about the pictures, the signs of spring—making connections. The whole thing just took off. Rather than watching something on the Smartboard—it was something that really happened. (Field Notes, May 17)

In her post-inquiry interview, Gwen recalled how these curriculum enrichment stories shared by T9 and T10 within the research community made a lasting impression on her thinking:

I'm never going to forget the two K teachers [T9 and T10] story on spring. They were doing a whole theme on spring and then the grandmother wrote out a story on her ancestry. Isn't that beautiful? It would be so much easier if teachers tapped into that knowledge. (Post-Interview)

When student and family knowledge is taken seriously it can become part of how curriculum is shaped. In much the same way, bringing together multiple voices and diverse perspectives as a research community contributed to everyone's social and cultural capital, and reciprocal appreciation of each other as holders of knowledge (Sebolt, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Through *communitas* and liminality, participants leaned into learning from and with each other's voices, funds of knowledge and world views. Curriculum in several teacher participant classrooms was similarly enriched through literacy events that invited children's worlds to overlap while breathing oxygen into meaningful life reasons that engaged their school literacy skills.

Deeply enacted critical pedagogy asks that teachers look beyond the traditional Discourse of school by recognizing the funds of knowledge that students bring with them to create learning experiences that are culturally responsive, relevant, and validating of their identities (Kinchelo, 2008). T3 reinforced this notion in her post-inquiry interview:

Without acknowledging that background that the students are bringing in, it's hard to go forward without fully knowing our students. We may know them in terms of their reading level and their writing abilities and their math levels, but I think that's not a child. That's not what a child identifies with, so I think without taking in what's important from their

family values and bringing it into the classroom including the parents and vice versa and opening our doors to that constant community teaching style - it goes beyond academics to that whole child. (Post-Interview)

In these stories of curricular enactment, the home-school interface was a dynamic, generative, productive, reciprocal and emotionally healthy space built on the assets that both families and educators together co-realized for their children's learning.

## **5.6 Diversity Strengthens Relational Spaces**

"Who are we really? And how do we get kids to understand and accept who they are and who the others are?" (Kim, Journal Entry, March 2)

One additional thread of transformative learning that appeared through data analysis was participants' attention to diversities that emerged within their discursive space. Inclusive acceptance became a social norm within the research community's third space. Participant field notes from March 2 illustrated the early onset of *communitas*: "Knowing your background and being comfortable (feeling accepted) enough to share creatively, expressively, emotionally and orally through choice; there is no right or wrong way to feel, be or know." Bringing together diverse voices and lifeworlds helped participants realize the commonalities with each other as members of a process interested and invested in exploring a collective lived experience together. Once connected in our tapestraic space, participants were able to learn what the world looked like from another perspective and gain greater empathy with and for one another.

In her post-inquiry interview, Maleeka provided a glimpse into how her family and child's home lifeworld rubbed up against what is experienced in school when the curriculum privileges a certain worldview and way of being by not always making room for children that live on the margins and boundaries of what is considered mainstream:

What's important is that [my kids] have two cultures and to take that into consideration. They speak another different language. They speak English but we speak Arabic at home. So different vision at Christmas we don't . . . especially [child] she used to feel like I am the only one who doesn't celebrate. That hurt her before. And just once her friend, who this year, is Muslim, too and she told her Mom, 'finally I am not the only one who doesn't celebrate Christmas—there is [child], too.' So they fit . . . 'oh we're the same, too'. So there's two cultures . . . just to appreciate that. (Post-Interview)

During the first research gathering on March 2 when participants engaged in storying and dialogue to get to know each other, Kim shared with the whole research community: "I learned that Maleeka's daughter in my class feels embarrassed to bring in her traditional Moroccan food for her lunch" (Field Notes, March 2). Kim later reflected further about this in her journal:

We spoke how kids don't want to be seen as different as it makes the other students "fear" them. Lots of "ew gross" comments when the food is different. I do feel that children need to understand that in order to stop fearing we need the opportunities to have kids learn from each other about each other. But to me it needs to be authentic, not just a demonstration of the stereotype of the culture. Who are we really? And how do we get kids to understand and accept who they are and who the others are? (Journal Entry, March 2)

Early attention to diversity within participant's life and school worlds and within the home-school interface opened the discursive research space as a place to learn from and with each other. Participant field notes from April 26 provide a further glimpse into how the research clusters were able through conscientization to actualize their thinking together:

- "Family diversity is respected and acknowledged—or is the acknowledging just because we are physically diverse (looking)—don't make assumptions"
- "Aware of being culturally aware of others—it's nice to ask someone who is safe, but do we ask the right people without offending them?"
- "[We are] trying to understand curiosity rather than racism—if people are not educated"
- "Modeling acceptance is important for our children"
- "Creating a classroom culture that shares and celebrates diversity"

Maleeka in her post-inquiry interview also shared how finding a place of belonging within the research community helped bridge for her a place of belonging within the school landscape that she had not yet experienced:

When I go wait for my kids, there isn't a lot of interaction with other moms. A few, one or two, but the others are - I feel like I'm far from what they talk or you know about...To me, it's (Gwen) because I don't have a relationship with other moms. That was really great. I feel like she want to be close to me and to know my culture. I feel like because I'm from a different country that was great. I feel like that we are getting close. Like you know when we meet at school if it wasn't for the research we would never talk to each other. (Post-Interview)

Gwen, in in her post-inquiry interview spoke about how coming to know Maleeka through the research community expanded her learning about and appreciation for diversity:

Really resonating with Maleeka and her culture and hearing about Ramadan and hearing about what she was going through as a mom and how similar it was to my own journey. Just finding those connections with both of them was really deep. It was very insightful

just to realize how similar we are even though she grew up in a different country and has immigrated here—just the similarities.

Then during our last research gathering, she shared a deeper transformative connection they had discovered and experienced in the research together:

I think one thing about us being together is we shared some pretty deep things that I don't share with everybody, you know. I'll never forget the day you said you feel walking into the school year people judging you [head scarf] and that was profound because as a 6 foot tall woman, I walk in the school grounds and I think about people judging me. So we're all walking in with what we are carrying - with the same feeling and it created this bond—like her daughter—I see her daughter and we have this very special relationship now just because of the community that has been created—it has affected our families, as well.

(Field Notes, June 14)

Maleeka in her post-inquiry interview described what it was like to feel belonging within the home-school interface for the first time:

It was amazing we met many people from different schools, different families, different backgrounds. I liked it. I don't know like difference, the color, the skin color and we were all happy and accepting each other and trying to do something. The same goal. Working on the same goal. I never experienced that. Because I'm always beside the wall, like I'm peaceful and beside the wall, like just listening, hearing, receiving. But this time it was like a good experience. And the appreciation of it. You see other people are thinking for the best, you know? Not like just accepting what we have. I feel like always we are doing good, like we are always for the better. (Post-Interview)

Critical participatory action research answers a call for creating conditions that promote democratic, collaborative, interpersonal relationships within a framework that aims to remove hierarchical and positional barriers to co-create new understandings and ways of being in the world. T10 concluded in her post-inquiry interview that opening up space for diversities is a component of professional and personal learning:

There are lots of different people out there that have different circumstances and that have got different cultures, they've got different viewpoints, they've got different interpretations of things and I think when you're open to inviting those people in, then you get educated yourself.

In keeping with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, Sokal (2003) reminds us that building relationships that promote children's learning, achievement and well-being, is about nurturing ecosystems both inside and outside school with those most invested in a child's development. P10, in a journal reflection discussed the implications of creating relational spaces and nurturing opportunities that bring a child's life and school worlds together:

Bringing in values is such a great idea to understand home literacies and personal histories that will support better learning opportunities in the classroom. It really comes back to getting to know the students and families and taking the time to listen and give opportunities to share. We can still focus on building relationships and collaborating with families to bring in home literacies and personal/cultural funds of knowledge to better support students and strengthen home/school connections in a mindful way—student voices and inquiry. (May 17)

Critical PAR can open spaces for what Gee (1996) refers to as an apprenticeship of a new or hybrid Discourse that welcomes diversity of values and identities rather than privileging only



that of the dominant institutional Discourse (Mackay, 2003). Participants throughout the research process engaged in challenging the historic barriers that previously had channeled their thinking and how they lived their roles within the home-school interface. They learned from and with each other by being in *communitas* and experiencing liminality together. This opened up possibilities for them as individuals to reflect upon how to bridge their roles and their worlds together as a means to support the child at the heart of their relationship. Not until well into the research process, once they had “created literacies of each other,” (T10) were they able to engage in meaningful constructive conversations about how creating a relational bridge could foster pedagogical transactions through shared knowledges and home lifeworld resources.

## **5.7 Summary**

### **5.7.1 Courageous and gracious space.**

Communicative spaces are social spaces found at the margins of institutions wherever people meet and interact, blurring boundaries and connecting with other public spheres (Kemmis, 2006; Kemmis et al., 2014). When boundaries, margins and access points that define a space are left unexamined and unquestioned, then roles are assumed and members are subordinated according to imposed identities and rules of engagement. Changing the dynamics of these spaces takes a process like conscientization where questioning assumptions, biases and taken for granted ways of being supersede acceptance and assimilation of the status quo.

Ledwith and Springett (2014) speak to the power of critical participatory approaches to bring insight into the relationship between power and knowledge and between people and institutions. Critical PAR begins with the notion that people are differently subordinated and privileged in a world that is full of contradicting ideas that lead to unequal access to power and privilege. The spirit of gracious space, as described by Tredway and Generett (2015) invites and

values "differences in background, experience, perspective and knowledge while affirming the dignity of members within that space based not on their title, but emphasizing their humanity first" (p. 19). In order to achieve such graciousness within the home-school interface relies on building effective relationships and partnerships that grow from a deep place of caring, connection, courage and purpose requiring "humility, a willingness to explore assumptions, letting go of the 'right way' of doing things and being willing to change one's mind and open one's heart" (Tredway & Generett, 2015, p. 4). If the home-school interface is treated as a gracious space that requires this kind of nourishment, then doors can open to challenge hindering policies and bridges can be co-constructed according to what and who needs to be connected. Only then can curricular spaces be authored in the spirit that welcomes tapestries of multi-voiced funds of knowledge and collective cultural capital around children's literacy learning, as well as their overall well-being and development. T3 in her post-inquiry interview affirmed how leaning into this perspective can help story a new narrative of school for teachers, children and their families:

I think what I've realized is that we're with these special little people for ten months, but they're with their parents for their whole lives. What they bring to us is years' worth of this knowledge and family connections and for us to not honor that or reach out to that within those ten months of their learning, I think is going to hinder their learning. I think that's something I've realized the more I've reached out to their families, the more I invited their families to be part of their learning, I realized that they learned more because they felt a part of them was in that classroom every day. They didn't have to turn on this different identity when they walked in the door. They could keep theirs. I think that to me it was eye-opening.

The process of participants' experiencing conscientization together over time created a new discursive and collective pedagogical space where the production of knowledge became a relational tapestratic curation of time in space together. An interwoven chorus of many voices and stories:

- "To tap the wisdom people hold, we need to hear their stories." (Tredway & Generett, 2015, p. 19)
- "Literacies at [and of] homes/families/school when expressed and valued create a literacy of each other- something that connects and binds us together." (T10)
- "Being aware of what your literacies are." (T7)
- "To exist, humanly, and to name the world to change it." (Freire, 1999, p. 69).
- "Who are we really? And how do we get kids to understand and accept who they are and who the others are?" (Kim)
- "To name the world is to change it." (Freire, 1999, pp. 68).
- "Value and be open to each other's literacies." (P7)
- "Human beings are social, historical beings, they are doers; they are transformers." (Freire & Macedo, 1987), p. 78).

## Chapter 6: Discussion

"Our identities are formed from institutional and cultural practices" (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p. 168).

Throughout the previous chapters, Maleeka, Gwen and Kim's voices along with their co-researcher participants have been representing their experiences, thinking, relating and renegotiated literacies of both themselves and each other. Here their voices return in conversation with each other to help weave together the tapestraic findings that have revealed themselves:

Gwen: I think we have to be storytellers. We just have to share our stories a bit more and before this year, we've had some very challenging experiences in school and we never did anything about them. (Post-Interview)

Kim: I want diversity to be celebrated in my classroom and taken up. I want parents invited into the classroom. I sent home a questionnaire to learn from their perspective—it gives parents a chance to tell their story. I invite parents to come in and share their own life stories. Every child is valued. (Presentation in B.Ed. class, October 16).

Maleeka: It was amazing we met many people from different schools, different families, different backgrounds. I liked it. I don't know like difference, the color, the skin color and we were all happy and accepting each other and trying to do something. (Post-Interview)

Kim: Having that opportunity to talk in a situation where it's not at school and it's not an official student-based conversation. It's just talking about teaching and parenting and bringing that together. It's having that opportunity because we don't have that opportunity—that really meant the most to me, having that opportunity to get to know [Maleeka and Gwen] on a different level. (Post-Interview)

Maleeka: I learned getting closer to the teacher, she is very good, very responsible. To me, it's Gwen because I don't have a relationship with other moms. That was really great. I feel like she want to be close to me and to know my culture. I feel like because I'm from a different country - that was great. I feel like that we are getting close. Like you know when we meet at school if it wasn't for the research we would never talk to each other. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: Getting to know my son's teacher on a different level and really resonating with Maleeka and her culture and hearing about Ramadan and hearing about what she was going through as a mom and how similar it was to my own journey. Just finding those connections with both of them was really deep. (Post-Interview)

Kim: I've always known that it's important to have parents involved, but it's reiterating the fact that it's really important to get the parents involved and to have them be right there from the very beginning in establishing those positive relationships. So that if there are issues, then you've already got a positive relationship with the parents and the parents know that you have the child's best interests at heart. So finding the time and finding ways at the very beginning to establish relationships, not it being just another thing that's going to add more to my plate that I have to do, but something that if I take the time to do, will probably take things off my plate later on. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: Connecting . . . I think it's up to me. I think [a] teacher can do what they're going to do, but I think it's up to me to create that bridge and to create that authentic connection and I need to work on that. (Post-Interview)

Maleeka: That means for me I can do the first step. I can start this connection. For me they can tell me what to do or yes, yes, okay, okay. But now I discuss if something

doesn't . . . I don't like . . . for me I can discuss that or maybe I can refuse this. Before I am just accepting and receiving. (Post-Interview)

Kim: Each family is different. It depends on what they can do. Not all parents can be involved in the same way and not all parents are comfortable in being involved in the same way. But the importance of parents knowing that they can be involved if they want to be and involved in a way that they're comfortable doing, but it's also important that they're involved. (Post-Interview)

Maleeka: Working on the same goal. I never experienced that. Because I'm always beside the wall, like I'm peaceful and beside the wall, like just listening, hearing, receiving. But this time it was like a good experience. And the appreciation of it. You see other people are thinking for the best, you know? Not like just accepting what we have. (Post-Interview)

Gwen: I now understand their [teachers'] voice—their perspective. I used to feel hopeless [home-school connections], but now I know I can communicate . . . Kim [and I] created an authentic connection. (Presentation in B.Ed. class, October 16).

Kim: Everyone comes in their shoes—some I will like and others I won't. Some parent's shoes I will like—they will match my own. Every parent brings in their concerns for their child. Because of the project I realized the anxiety is on the other side, too. They are also worried about being judged—about us shoulding them....It's still not comfortable—I still have self-doubts—but I have an open mind and heart. (Presentation in B.Ed. class, October 16).

## 6.1 Discussion Overview

The purpose of this study was to bring together teachers and family members (in this case parents) as co-researchers/participants to co-create a discursive space to foster integration of their funds of knowledge around children's literacy development and to further inquire into enriching the lived curriculum in their shared child's classroom. Based on the findings resulting from both inductive and deductive data analysis, discussion will begin with how curriculum and literacy learning in school can be enriched as a result of parents and teachers joining together as co-researcher and learning partners in a communicative space over time. Discussion will then move towards unpacking the critical participatory action research methodology process experienced together to better understand the conditions that opened up such a communicative space and the resulting transformations in practices or their sayings, doings, relatings (Kemmis, et al., 2014) within their home-school interface.

Participants co-created a third space where they experienced *communitas* and liminality together, while questioning and "unlearning the current and taken for granted truths of school" (Pushor, 2013, p. 224) as experienced through their previous lived experiences. Third space became a relational space that removed hierarchy and eliminated power entanglements commonly experienced between teachers and parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). A socio-cultural theoretical framework also helped further attend to challenging policies and practices that serve as barriers to how home and school, teachers and parents are positioned and position each other within the home-school interface. At the heart of this critical participatory process was the intention of creating conditions for transformative learning, and for the emergence of transformations of role, identity and world view within participants' actual lived experiences.

Findings from the research process described temporally and illustrated through metaphors derived from the participants together in *communitas* represented a time and space of liminality where social hierarchies were temporarily dissolved and continuity of taken for granted traditions questioned and thrown into doubt (Turner, 1969). Liminality, in turn, opened up spaces of trusting reciprocity that underscored the process of conscientization where storying, dialoguing, problematizing, and reflecting led to various forms of action.

## **6.2 Curricular Illuminations**

Participants' understanding of the meaning of literacy moved from autonomous school focused definitions to more of an ideological sociocultural framing of literacies (Street, 1984). This resulted in redefined understandings of children's literacy development and learning to include their families' funds of knowledge, linguistic and cultural capital (Gonzalez, et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). This topic was taken up in the fourth research gathering after *communitas* was established and the process of storying, dialoguing, problematizing and reflecting became a routinized aspect of our third space. Acknowledging families and children as holders and embodiments of funds of knowledge transformed from cursory awareness to meaningful educational capital and resources for creating authentic literacy learning events that hold potential to bridge children's multiple sites of knowing and learning.

When teachers and parents understand how each defines, values and uses literacy as part of their primary Discourse identity (Gee, 1996) and cultural practices, then school curriculum can actively interweave and honor the knowledges of children and families, as well as respond to how these can be used to enhance the learning of school literacies. It also offers parents the opportunity to observe and understand the literacy of schooling, a literacy which ultimately empowers individuals to take their place in society (Cairney, 1997, p. 70).



Knowing children, families and their community in this way requires disruption of the hetero-normative way of viewing curriculum as a one-way transmission of knowledge, as well as understanding what has historically been privileged as the most important literacy skill knowledge. Studies of out of school literacies that children experience in their lifeworlds do not privilege them over school literacy, but support the notion of them being brought together into classrooms just as school literacy is brought into homes and the community (Cook, 2005; Dantas & Manyak, 2010; Hannon, 1995; Knoebel & Lankshear, 2003; Taylor, 1997).

Learning about diversity from and with each other in the research space also fostered a better understanding of how this might transpire in a classroom community. Third space over time embraced some participants who had previously been marginalized in their school communities based on visible differences in dress, race, and language as well as in invisible differences in role assumptions, worldview, past experiences within schools, social capital and Discourse membership. A home-school interface created with and from diverse perspectives, cultural lifeworlds and families supported children's culturally responsive learning in their classroom spaces and created bridges for parents and family members to see themselves as meaningful contributors within those learning spaces.

In order for curriculum to truly be culturally safe and responsive to that which children bring with them to school learning requires a commitment to acknowledging and valuing familial, cultural and community diversities. It, however, might be even more important to not misappropriate and misrepresent children and families' social and cultural capital by acting on their behalf when designing curriculum that attempts to represent their home lifeworlds and experiences. Ada and Campoy (2004) reminds us: "Addressing systemic biases and/or personal

biases and assumptions helps humans learn about one another and get in touch with our shared humanity" (p. 17).

As T10 reflected in her post-interview:

There are lots of different people out there that have different circumstances and that have got different cultures, they've got different viewpoints, they've got different interpretations of things and I think when you're open to inviting those people in, then you get educated yourself.

Confronting personal and collective biases, assumptions and judgements requires a commitment to being open to learning from whomever populates the spaces between home and school especially when children are shared at those spatial intersections. Only then, can schools, classrooms and curriculum be true to the contextual tapestries situated within the intersections of worlds that children bring to their learning. Only then can teaching and learning within classrooms begin to reflect and respond pedagogically to children's lifeworld funds of knowledge as a means to further their school literacy learning. As T6 in her post-interview further elaborated:

Really looking at those deep personal social competencies and being able to draw out those common themes and reuse our family's knowledge to help bring those alive.

Otherwise, how do we talk about identity when we don't have those opportunities to bring identity in? So really co-creating the experiences with our families. Because we only have one perspective and being able to invite those families in just to create those experiences together.

Malaguzzi (1994) reminds us that when children enter into a classroom they carry with them pieces of their lives in the form of stories, memories, experiences and cultural knowledge.

When children are invited to use their home lifeworld knowledge as autobiographical pedagogical resources to further their school literacy learning, increased affect can lead to increased engagement, interest, passion, agency, and confidence. Lenters (2016) builds upon the impact of affect on school literacy learning:

In literacy learning, consideration of affect provides a means for exploring those unconscious forces—physical and cognitive intensities—within an individual’s learning assemblage that work to support, motivate, and inspire literate engagements . . . Feelings, saliencies, desires, relationships, connections—each an affective response—propel learning. (pp. 286-287)

T11 in her post-interview reflected on the implications of recognizing moments of affect when attending closely to a child's lifeworld knowledge:

I had one boy in particular who always had something to tell me about his hunting trip or his lacrosse game and all those literacies. His hunting trip, his lacrosse game, what he did on the weekend with his papa. So I didn't necessarily rush to get to something else. I actually have a little stool by where I sort of sit by my computer sometimes and I would say, "Have a seat and tell me more." And when I did that you could see that this boy just became so much more invested in being there.

Dyson (1993) emphasizes: "A permeable curriculum recognizes the varied cultural materials children draw on in classrooms and find ways of enabling them to use, reflect upon and build on these" (p. 28). When children were invited to use their home lifeworld knowledge and literacies to practice and extend their repertoire of school literacy skills, different aspects of the curriculum illuminated for different children based on the assemblages (Lenters, 2016) that were accompanying them into their learning. Aoki (1992/2005e) referred to creating such spaces for

learning as being "populated by a multiplicity of curricula, that can be found in the discourse of lived curricula which speaks a somewhat different language—a more concretely situated, embodied and incarnated, often narratively told language" of living and learning together (p. 273).

### **6.3 Permeability within Ecological Boundaries**

"Awareness has caused bridges between home and school" (Participant Field Notes, June 14). Experiencing *communitas* enabled participants' enhanced understandings of their own situatedness as well as how they had previously situated each other within the structural boundaries that defined the home-school interface.

During her presentation to a B.Ed. class on October 16, P10 shared how the research experience helped open her heart and mind to the possibilities of living within a different home-school interface than she had previously experienced:

I came into the research group very emotional. My grade 2 boy had a rough start last year and then T1 came to the class in the middle of the year. Up until then it was a struggle with the previous teacher. My last conversation with her on the phone—she hung up on me. I was let down with the way things went with the previous teacher. Emails and phone calls historically have been negative. I shared things with T1 in an open and honest way. I was listened to and trusted. I have valuable information as a parent. I am the expert on my son. This information helped her meet his needs.

Teaching and parenting; parenting and teaching converged equally through relational connectivity and metaphoric bridges that developed into a sense of togetherness and trust disrupting previously held institutionalized and unquestioned hegemonic borders and roles.

Experiencing liminality enabled an understanding that to live in partnership between home and school; teacher and parent, means leveling former hierarchical positionalities that participants brought with them into the research space. Bridge as a metaphor represents multi-faceted aspects of how to build and nurture a space where home and school can productively connect; where boundaries are more permeable and less restrictive. As T2 shared in her post-interview: "It made me think about the mesosystem . . . that connection between family and school and home and whether we nurture it or not, it's there." Nurturing as a multi-faceted process of realizing one's own potential in having agency to reach out to the other; of realizing equality and unity with a mutual sense of purpose; of realizing reciprocal vulnerability through empathy and a shared need for safety; and, of realizing the strength in coming together in service of a child's overall development and wellbeing.

Authentic and productive home-school partnerships are not something that are imposed, organized and prescribed for teachers and parents according to externally created formulaic ritualized events and practices that assume a "pedagogicalization of the parent" (Popkewitz, 2003, p. 53) and homogeneous expectations for all (Baez & Talburt, 2008; Doucet, 2011; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Lam & Kwong, 2012; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Rather, authentic and productive home-school partnerships are developed contextually with sensitivity to the cultural and social capital and resources that live within families and communities and a sensitivity to how one's own privileges, beliefs, biases and assumptions, as well as the systemic biases embodied in social structures and institutions that position families within the home-school interface is reflected in how one practices within that interface (Constantino, 2005; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009; Miller-Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010; Pushor, 2007, 2013; Thiers, 2017).

## 6.4 Tapestraic Spaces of Connectivity

"We are beyond museum pieces that force us to look at each other, but a tapestry that has us weave together" (Gwen, October 16). Bringing together multiple voices and perspectives into a critical third space over time allowed participants to shed their previous prescribed roles as 'parent' or 'teacher' and be themselves, finding equality and belonging through representation of their own stories. T9 reflected in her journal on April 4: "I notice that we are all on an even 'playing field.' I really can't tell who the parents are and who the teachers are."

Becoming aware of their own embeddedness in past lived experiences within the home-school interface wove together with being heard and finding resonance in the stories of others. Discovering commonality among differences, connecting and collaborating, finding acceptance, being validated as humans in relationship with other humans.

In-between spaces exist whether we intentionally nurture them or not (Bhabha, 1994). Space is socially constructed and can be malleable, permeable and changeable if tended intentionally (Soja, 1996). Opening spaces that invite deconstruction and reconstruction of the status quo and taken-for-granted practices and ways of being in the world requires a deep level of trust. This trust is not an automatic accompaniment or given when stepping into the home-school interface. In fact, history would dictate otherwise, that this in-between space or borderland between families and schools has long been known as possessing the most "complex and tender geography" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 4). Openness to entering into this complex and tender geography was determined by many participants as synonymous with a high degree of personal vulnerability accompanied by realizations that to be relational in the home-school interface requires an authentic opening of self to others. T1 explained what opening up meant to her while speaking to a B.Ed. class on October 16:

I learned a lot about me as a teacher and a person. Why would a parent want to open up to me if I didn't open up to them? I didn't want to be a teacher as above them, but as a person equal to them. Together in a safe place and expand that to others in my classroom.

Being hospitable, creating spaces of graciousness and hospitality by realizing the potential in welcoming others into in-between learning and living spaces as knowledge holders and reciprocal teachers. Realizing that long term implications of expanding authentic relational spaces demands time and requires willingness to meet one another at a human juncture where roles are subordinated by a shared commitment to the well-being of a child. Realizing this is a commitment to ongoing reflection and action: a living praxis that requires reinvention with every new in-between home-school space that one encounters.

In their post-interviews, both P6 and T11 reflected on what it was like to be a participant in the research space from their respective role's perspective:

P6: I really liked people sharing their stories. Having the first child in school we don't have the stories . . . so I thought it was really cool and just the breadth. I'd never experienced that, so I had no idea what it felt like or what the parents were going through or how they could deal with it. I thought that was really valuable. I thought of it more as community.

T11: I wish schools felt like that, a very welcoming community of people and what meant the most to me was I was able to listen to other people's stories and sort of glean from them what I can use in my own practice, as well as my opinion counted. It was a very nurturing process.

Space is seen as a formidable force that shapes human action (Soja, 1996). Creating spaces that invite dialogue and problematize shared lived experiences from differing perspectives

and roles that historically have not come together offers new opportunities for praxis, for transforming practice, as well as widening the path for learning with and from others.

## **6.5 Confronting Forms of Power by Interrupting and Renegotiating Roles and Identities**

The demographic context (Statistics Canada, 2017) within which this research was conducted closely represented within the demographics of the participants (See Appendix D) suggest that the forms of power most illuminated within the research space were less about economic, social class, gender dynamics and more about examining the intersections and interplay of multiple Discourses. Cultural capital found in Discourse membership plays a central role in societal power relations, as this "provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy" (Gaventa, 2003, p. 6). Cultural and symbolic forms of capital are to a large extent where the causes of inequality are hidden. The diverse lifeworlds of participants were represented culturally, positionally and relationally within the lived experiences brought forward to the research space.

### **6.5.1 Shape-shifting: Roles and identities.**

Both parent and teacher participants through the process of conscientization over time interrupted and renegotiated their own identities and positioning within the home-school interface, as well as shifted how they positioned each other's roles within that space. Gee describes this renegotiation of identities as "shape-shifting" not as a form of adaptation, but rather as a "person see[ing] him or herself as an ever re-arrangeable set of skills and experiences that can be shaped anew for each occasion . . . in order to take on a new identity" (as cited in Miano, 2004, p. 312). Participants returning to the research third space each time spiraled towards deeper relational affinity and more hybridity in Discourse and in how they saw themselves and each other.



It is important to note that all parent (and teacher) participants in this study self-identified as interested in participating in a research study already entering into it with a certain measure of confidence, social capital and openness to learn within a diverse group setting. This level of comfort was made evident by 9/11 parents indicating that they felt high levels of comfort of physically being in their child's school with 6/11 parents actively volunteering in their children's classrooms or on parent advisory councils. P10 explained this further in her pre-interview:

They're just very much like "This is your space, not just our space, this is your family's space as well." So you're comfortable just going in. They all know you by name. You call and they recognize you by your face and your name and family.

In their pre-interviews, 10/11 parent participants were able to clearly explain their role and positionality within the home-school interface as compliant with how it was framed for them by the school, as articulated by P4: "My role is to sort of accompany and sort of be an accompaniment to his learning. Whatever he's learning at school, just to reinforce that at home," and further reinforced by P11 in her pre-interview: "The parent's role is to be involved and know what is going on from the school and classroom's perspective. I am on PAC and receive information from the bigger school district."

Parent participants obviously brought with them into the research both an interest in exploring the topic, but also personal static identities (Miano, 2004) based on their social capital, confidence, and agency. These identities had previously helped them gain access into the home-school interface with teachers who were also accompanied by their own static identities based on the power dynamics inherent in their role (Brien & Stelmach, 2009). Over the course of the research through the process of conscientization, these parent participants already comfortable with their roles, positions and identities within the home-school interface came to question those

same historical identities imposed upon them. These participants took for granted that their involvement within the home-school interface amounted to volunteering, attending school functions, fund-raising, and as teacher-helper to meet the school's conception of what their role should entail (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Pushor, 2007).

When interviewed after the research process, 9/10 parent participants redefined their role and positionality within the home school interface to reflect more reciprocity in how they could interact with their child's teacher. P4 elaborated further: "Less of an attitude of you versus me and more of –we're a team", while P9 took it a step further to offer, "Sharing what they do [at home] to bring awareness and appreciating others, all the differences and that there isn't a right and a wrong. We are all doing what we do."

Eight parent participants in their post-interviews described a different kind of home-school interface than they had previously imagined and lived. P4 indicated in her post-interview a renewed understanding of how she would approach next year's teacher less assertively: "How I will communicate will change versus this year . . . I'll come into the relationship with the teacher a little less controlling than I was with [child]." While P7 thought she might work harder at fostering a sense of team:

Seeing where I can go after being in a research group say for next year, how to connect with her teacher next year and keep that going so that we can foster that relationship and not just be "the mom," "the teacher," and that we can be that team together.

P6 shared in her journal (n.d.) how her role, identity and worldview had transformed through the research process:

I do know that I am very much a rule follower and if the system exists in such a way, I am likely to just follow the school system as it exists. This is the one point that will stick

with me: to look outside the box and look for ways to be different or better. Listening to different stories gave me perspective that I didn't have before.

Renewed agency and sense of voice also prevailed in 7/10 post-interviews with parent participants. P7 continued to describe her new understanding of what it meant to her to be in partnership with her child's school and teacher during her post-interview:

Next year I can come in and say, 'ok, I understand your role, and this is my role. Being able to use that language and to say that we are the connecting and we are team and that we want to foster that team and be there for each other...To have a voice...That I can use my voice . . . Had I not been part of this, I don't think I would have ever realized that I have a bigger voice than I was already giving.

Five parent participants critically questioned and challenged the normative practices that position parents within certain idealized roles within the home-school interface (Brien & Stelmach, 2009). For example, Gwen explained in her post-interview that: [Ritualized practices that give parents opportunities to interact with the school are] "just completely disingenuous. We're getting parents to come in to do ridiculous things and it's meaningless. We're doing things just because they've always been done that way."

After coming together on four occasions over four months, participants in their second last research gathering, were able to take up how lifeworld funds of knowledge and cultural habitus could enrich the literacy learning curriculum within the participant teachers' classrooms. This kind of discussion involving pedagogical and curricular discourse could not have happened earlier in the research process. It is important to note how time to build liminality and *communitas* softened the power dynamics among the participants opening up pathways to conversations that typically do not occur between those who distinctly occupy teacher and parent

roles. Some parent participants felt inspired and confident to participate in learning activities in classrooms. Gwen wrote in her journal on June 24:

This group has made me ponder how I can affect my boys' three classrooms by using my "funds of knowledge" . . . I have gone into my middle son's class (grade 2) to teach an orienteering lesson. I have also been going into my kindergarten son's class to consistently work with the students at a literacy center sharing my love and enthusiasm for words and reading.

The impact of parents sharing their knowledge in classrooms also invited children to view them differently - as knowledge holders or as teachers within a learning space where parents normally do not enact such roles. Parent participants who were able to engage meaningful with school learning activities saw themselves differently, with agency and confidence, as teachers and contributors to their child's school learning and curriculum as described by P9 in his post-interview:

What I have to offer (child's) teacher is a sprinkle in her bucket, but I think it does help and it has helped make that connection and that's where the learning begins. Mine in particular just said two days ago, "I really like it when you came into the classroom, Dad. That was cool" . . . Just from the feedback there, I guess it really bumped her self-esteem and inspired her. It was encouraging.

Teacher participants also showed evidence of reexamining their power-laden role, positionality and identity through their axiomatic membership within a hegemonic Discourse (Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Nakagawa, 2000; Pushor, 2007). Eleven out of thirteen teachers and teacher candidates, post-research described how they had experienced shape-shifting in their thinking regarding their identities and positionalities within

the home-school interface. For example, T7 in her June journal reflection demonstrated a deeper understanding of how she had adopted her teacher identity unquestioningly while inducted into the role early in her career, then further explained:

Being able to talk to parents even though I myself am not one . . . . That was a barrier for me and definitely a label that I imposed prior to this study. "I am a teacher. You are a parent. My role is to teach, your role I don't have experience with so I am not comfortable to comment." These are the thoughts I had at the beginning of the year. Things have shifted. Though we have different roles, different literacies, different means, ultimately our goal is the same, to create a community around each child that encourages growth, fosters literacies and supports development.

Eleven out of thirteen teachers and teacher candidates openly questioned the assumptions that led to their previous practices within that role and speculated on how these practices moving forward could change. In her post-interview, T3 reflected on how her group participatory research experiences might translate into her professional practice:

What's really helped is I broke down my own personal barriers of feelings like I need to be this person who had all the knowledge and when a parent came in I need to somehow be ok with saying, "You know what I'm not really sure but I'd love to explore that with you, and let our child further that question for me, or what you're noticing about your child?" I think what I've noticed is just a kind of break down my wall of . . . they're just another person and they just want to come in and share their stories, too, and I have my own, too.

All teacher participants made visible a more family-centered attunement to diversities of circumstance, interest, strength, as well as empathy and awareness towards families' comfort –

levels, barriers and limitations. Kim during her presentation in a B.Ed. class on October 16 critically problematized and questioned her positionality and role within the home-school interface post-research:

It's an even platform—not teacher over, not parent over. In the 1990s we learned that it's a triangle—parent, teacher, student. Making the triangle a circle is ultimately what we all want . . . How do we make parent involvement authentic and what does it mean? I have a lens—how they should . . . But, that's not necessarily the way parents see it. I have no clue what the history is at home. It's enlightening when a parent brings in the background information. Parents “should” share, but we are still strangers. Why should they feel they have to tell me? They are bringing their own lives with them. The authentic piece- [a shared story from a research gathering] the father was involved in his children's schooling in an authentic way—he fed them, clothed them; he provided them with a stable home. From the teacher's lens it appeared that he didn't care because he did not come to school. My authentic lens is not the same as others' authentic lens. An open door for parents . . . it's important. I have to take that time and it's going to take a long time for that trust to develop. It's still not comfortable—I still have self-doubts—but I have an open mind and heart.

Parents who brought a perspective of their one child to the home-school interface saw more deeply and empathetically into the complexities and challenges of what it means to be a teacher trying to navigate between multiple children and families. In her post-interview, P10 articulated an empathetic view of what it must be like for teachers:

As a parent you focus on your child. But looking at it from the other side, you see that they're trying to do this with 25-30 other kids at the same time, so it can be a real

challenge with the time and energy and what can they do? A lot of times their hands are tied as well. So I think trying to understand that they do want to make positive, like they want to build that connection but sometimes it's hard and you have to give them some leeway there, that it's not just that there's a whole community, that you're working together for all of these little people.

Conversely, Gwen in her post-interview shared the challenges inherent in situations when parents are not given the space and time to share knowledge, worries and hopes for their child with a teacher:

Someone needs to start having a conversation with [parents] and say: What do you actually need? How could we get you connected? What are you looking for? And meeting them where they are at. I have one friend that—her little guy he's got a lot of skills that aren't treasured in schools. He is treasured—it's just she doesn't feel like any of her needs are being met with him. And imagine if someone asked her the question. "What do you need?"

"A third space is often understood as a location for exploring issues of dominance, power and emancipation. It is a means to imagine new ways of working, new ways of talking and original, transformative ways of relating" (Waterhouse, McLaughlin, McLellan, & Morgan, 2009, p. 5). Third space according to Soja (1996, 2014) is collaboratively constructed and socially produced that invites extraordinary openness and nurtures critical exchange. Viewing the home-school interface as a vibrant third navigational space filled with potential invites weaving together an integration of knowledges and Discourses from home and school to produce new learning for all (Moje et al., 2004). Static identities as shaped by institutions and our socio-cultural Discourse memberships, can be interrupted and reshaped as we bridge between social

life spaces. This study's tapestraic space of connectivity was built upon taking risks to be vulnerable, an openness to diversity of voice and experience, and what Ruder (2009) calls acts of graciousness within gracious space:

Gracious space develops the capacity for each person to fully show up and to make room for others to do the same. It supports groups learning by addressing both similarities and differences, weaving a new inclusive social fabric. When we embrace graciousness, we choose an approach that fosters understanding. We choose to be open-minded and welcoming of diverse opinions and viewpoints. This attitude grows within us and is nurtured through practice. When individuals and groups learn together from the inside out, we create the conditions for transformative change. (p. 2)

What remains and lingers from our research space is an indelible and memorable sense of togetherness built from within a mutually synergized power, not hierarchically imposed, but emerging graciously from multiplicity within lived experience.

#### **6.5.2 Contradictive identity revealed and negotiated.**

T5 presented an illustrative example of living within contradictive identities as participating within the research space as both a teacher and a parent. Through her personal journal reflections as well as her shared stories during research gatherings, she was able to reveal the contradictions inherent in being socialized as a teacher to understand the positionality and power within that role, while at the same time knowing her positionality as a parent meant subordinating her voice within the home-school interface.

What was significant for T5 during the ongoing process of conscientization within the research gatherings was a realization that despite being a teacher in the school system, she too, had experienced feelings of powerlessness when it came to her role as a parent within the home-



school interface. During the final research gathering after being in the study over five months, she shared her story through her parent voice with the other participants:

I've been a little sad and stressed about my daughter's school experience the last two years and I was really hopeful for this year to be a really great year. I literally had to block it out of my mind about how just not fair her school experience has been. So through these coaching conversations I've made an appointment to go and speak with the school administration tomorrow morning. I feel really empowered to try to go in as a partner rather than the person who . . . "please let me meet with you; please let me share my feelings about my daughter; please let me share this kind of thing, but go in not being entitled—I'm an educator, too. That's not what this is all about . . . but rather a partner in her success." (Field Notes, June 14)

The following day T5 shared her school appointment experience in her role not as a teacher, but as a parent, with the other research participants in an email:

I wanted to report back to everyone about my meeting with the administration at my daughter's school. I didn't feel all that nervous after the group's encouraging warmth last night. The meeting went exceptionally well. I felt welcomed, heard and most importantly in partnership with the school about the decisions being made in regards to my daughter's future educational journey. Thank you again for all the support that lead me to the decision to engage in this meeting. (June 15)

T5's duality of roles positioned her within the research space to view the home-school interface from both sides of the metaphoric door. It is interesting how static the roles of teacher verses parent had become so engrained in her dual positionalities; understanding the role of power inherent in a teacher's role and at the same time deferring to that power when in her role

as a parent. This leads to further questions about duality of roles within the home-school interface and the potentialities that live in:

“communities of practice,” in which knowledge is shared and practices carried out among community members, appears to be the context in which our heteroglossic tendencies can emerge and interact, providing a safe haven in which hybridities can flourish and we can learn to see contradictions . . . as not so contradictory, but instead transformative, after all. (Miano, 2004, p. 313)

## **6.6 Counterpoints**

Such spaces of hybridity and graciousness, however, are admittedly difficult and often laden with multi-levels of structural, personal, visible and invisible barriers. Although participants all agreed that experiencing gracious elements in tapestraic space together was achieved, they were not immune to consider the realities of the home-school interface beyond the relational safety they had achieved together. Despite identities interrupted and roles renegotiated within the research space, questions continued to surface among participants regarding the efficacy of their newfound agency beyond the borders of our safe space. For example, P4 in her April 4 journal reflection, pondered on the realities of reaching relational intersubjectivity amongst partners within an ecological systems theory perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992):

The mesosystem can be complicated when the morals/beliefs between the individual and the school clash. How we can have a harmonious mesosystem when the beliefs of the individual and the practices of the teacher conflict with each other? When a clear disagreement of some sort exists, what is the best way to handle it? It seems that working out a compromise or having a good-natured, gracious discussion about the matter with hopes of coming to a mutually-agreed upon solution would be the best option. Should the

teacher adjust her plans to accommodate the student? Should the parents compromise their beliefs or adjust their plans to accommodate the teacher/curriculum? Should the child sit out of the activity but feel excluded? The mesosystem is theoretically wonderful, but there will always be some complications to this connection when dissonance exists.

TC2 in her May 17 journal entry echoed similar concerns about the reality of confronting dissonance within a home-school interface that she had yet to experience in practice:

I heard others wondering how they can work with some parents who do not agree with the way they are teaching and are not feeling trusted. Parents continue to complain to them and their principal about their teaching practice. This makes me wonder—how do you connect with the parents who don't trust you? I want to learn about their values and for them to know mine, but what if they don't align? How can we connect with these parents? How do we show that we accept and appreciate their values, too? It makes me nervous beginning my teaching career hearing these stories of parents distrust and complaints. How do you gain their trust and respect if their view of school is different than my practice?

P5 in her post-interview questioned how realistic it might be to expect all parents to want to engage with teachers in the home-school interface:

I would love it if all parents felt they could be involved in their child's school experience and their learning experience. I don't necessarily think that is realistic. I think there are just some people who don't want to be reached. They like those compartments, they like that their kid goes to school and that's the receptacle for them during the day. They don't much care what goes on in school during the day. And, that's ok for those people because that's just how they are.

T6 in her post-interview pointed out larger systemic barriers at play that undeniably obstruct shaping spaces for home and school to interact relationally: "It's bigger than just us; have to look at it in a systemic way; it's going to take time and we can just do what we can do as long as we're valuing it." Kim reflected in a March 4 journal entry on other barriers that inherently constrain how teachers are bound by systemic rules of engagement: "There are regulations to follow, union rules to follow, insurance issues to keep in mind." T2 in her post-interview also wondered how to navigate all of the other demands on her time as a teacher to make space and time for creating positive home-school connections:

I also think that there is a time constraint because I spent most of my time this year dealing with Ministry issues, and behavior issues and it left little time for having those positive communication with parents. So I don't know what the answer is to reaching out. I don't know how as one teacher you take that on as a whole school, as a whole system. Start with my classroom and maybe it'll catch on - I don't know?

Challenges, barriers, systemic rules, personal boundaries all came into play as participants continued to consider how to shape effective, positive and relational home-school interface spaces beyond their research experience. It would be disingenuous and unrealistic to ignore how these dynamics were never far from reach in participants' thinking, reflecting and negotiation of the multi-voiced realities that reflect the status quo within their own life and school worlds.

## **6.7 Disrupting the Status Quo or Opening Doors**

"I was surprised—we had our first child [begin school] this year and you kind of think there's like this boundary, the door" (P8, Post-Interview). P8 echoes that claim that the space between home and school has been historically created and institutionally defined, enacted, and

bordered by a force field of taken for granted practices embedded within habitus and grammar of schooling (Bourdieu, 1980; Giroux, 1996; Tyack & Tobin, 1993) (See Figure 11).

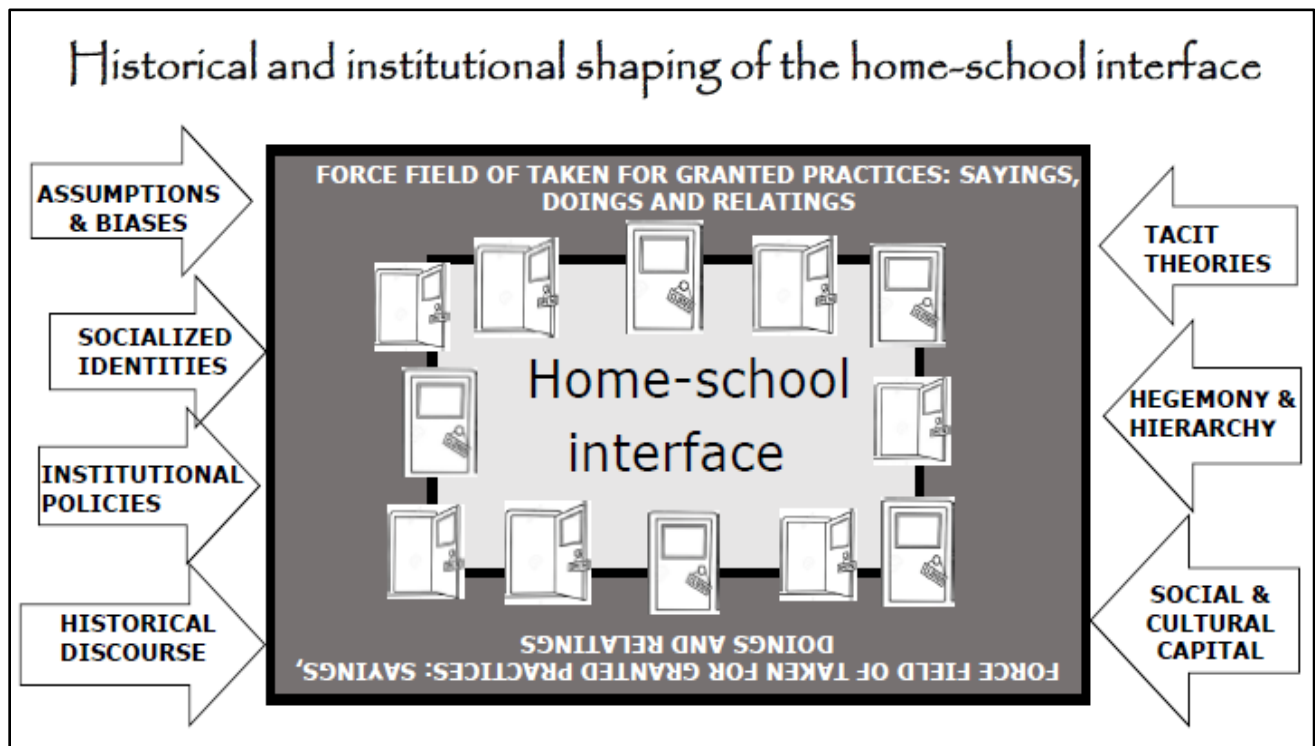


Figure 11. Historical and institutional shaping of the home-school interface.

Within this force field bound space, there are idealized and generalized expectations placed on both teacher and parent roles. Prior to the research study participants understood their roles and were living in this space accordingly. Doors, as a metaphor, arose early on in initial data analysis of the participants' pre-research interviews. Metaphorically and conceptually, doors act as a demarcation representing a metaphysical entity; an in-betweenness that imposes habitus and determines belonging and Discourse enacted on behalf of policies that inform practices (sayings, doings, relatings) on either side of the door. Doors represent the status quo; the script by which roles are enacted or the traditional grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1993).

Teachers and parents are inducted into a way of being and a way of enacting their roles that are influenced by larger exo- and macro-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1992) policies;

policies as discovered through the participants that are absent yet present, unclear and invisible, yet prominent in their practices. Official policies about how home and school should interact live in the background of institutional practices. Participants used the word “policy” (whose etymology suggests a way of management or a plan of action, see Policy, 2018) to describe their own personal and professional practices within their own lived experiences.

Exosystemic policies meant to bring home and school together in general do more to alienate, exclude, marginalize, silence and keep the space or terrain between home and school tenuous, uncertain, inhospitable, and hegemonic especially for those who do not share the same cultural and social capital as the institution privileges and desires (Baez & Talburt, 2008; Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Doucet, 2011; Lareau, 2000; Pushor, 2007). School-centric ritualized events and monologic communicative methods as guided by policies are represented in the structural ways that home and school interface (Pushor, 2017). These structural events and methods traditionally have become pivotal moments when assumptions and biases about families, parents and children's homes are either further reinforced or disrupted. Parents are characterized as good and collaborative or as uncaring or deficient according to whether or not they participate in these activities (Doucet, 2011; Robinson & Harris, 2014). These are also pivotal events, moments and methods that reinforce parents' sense of whether or not they see themselves as active members belonging or not belonging within that space. Parents and families are most likely to participate in these events and methods when they are linguistically, culturally and socioeconomically aligned with the cultural codes of the teachers and the school (Baez & Talbert, 2008; Doucet, 2011; Gorski, 2011; Lareau, 2000).

Established rules of engagement predetermine and define what a good parent practices within the home-school interface and what a good teacher does to encourage these practices

Brien & Stelmach, 2009; Doucet, 2011; Pushor, 2007). The parent and teacher participants who participated in this study described attitudes and experiences in their pre-interviews as congruent with these predetermined roles. Teacher participants were in the habit of communicating their expectations to parents, held expectations that the role of home was mainly to support them at school, and expected that parents should attend all structural events organized by the school. T9 echoes these sentiments: "Parents should understand the reasoning why we send things home for them to reinforce with their children."

Parent participants generally waited to be told how to participate in supporting the school and what rules of engagement exist within a given home-school space as designed by the teacher and/or school as reinforced by P8 and P10 respectively in their pre-interviews: "Our job is to support what's going on in the classroom, as parents," and "I think their role [teacher] is to help support the parents in best practices and showing them how to connect with their child's education in school."

Ledwith and Springett (2014) contend that: "Without a critical approach to practice, practitioners unquestioningly reproduce the existing order of things" (p. 162). When certain practices are prescriptive and embedded in everyday behavior, thinking, and acting, the underlying assumptions that guide those practices go unquestioned and unnoticed. First recognizing the reasons that doors (status quo) exist is foundational to realizing that the space between home and school is actually much more malleable and permeable when seen as social and relational, rather than exclusively rule-bound and policy-driven. Therefore, much like with Third Space theory, the home-school interface when perceived as a socially constructed space, can also be redesigned contextually, socially, relationally, interactively and responsively when co-created by those who desire to be involved in a more inclusive, gracious and generative space.

This would mean flipping the traditional script and grammar of schooling by realizing the force field of taken for granted practices, like barriers, interfere rather than promote relational home-school partnerships. Flipping the script in favor of tapestraic connectedness that disrupts the status quo (See Figure 12) as further described by P10 and T7 in their post-interviews:

P10: I think what meant the most to me was seeing how many teachers care as deeply about building a strong home-school connection as parents do. Because you feel like as a parent, you're the one who's advocating for your child all the time and pushing for them to get the best care and support and education. And depending on your history or background you kind of think sometimes that you're up against it. So that really meant a lot to me, just seeing how many educators were so passionate about home-school connections and about why that's so important and why it's such a key piece of the education system.

T7: Maybe they have bad memories or poor experiences from their background . . . or any number of different things inhibiting them from venturing across that bridge. Then there's lots of parents are less fearful and they're more willing to go across. But on the other side, you can have the teacher that's had maybe not so good experiences with parents so they can be fearful in crossing that bridge. Or maybe they're again that personality that's ok to reach out to people and bring them across. I think the more we know about each other, the more grace we'll give each other and willingness to cross the bridge.



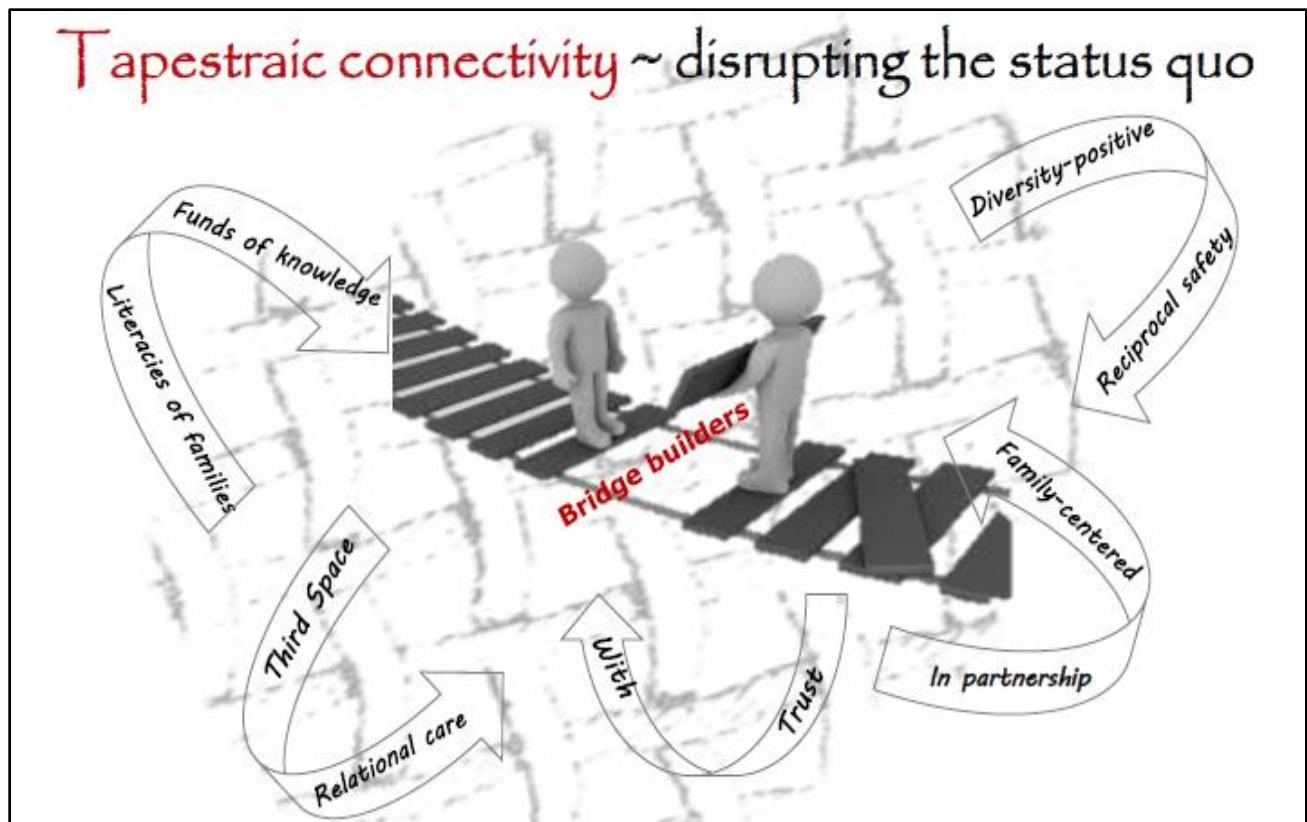


Figure 12. Tapestraic connectivity.

## 6.8 Creating New Literacies of Each Other and of Ourselves

"We've lived our way into a new way of thinking—how could you live your way backwards?" (T6, post-interview)

"Participatory practice begins in lived reality, in our being in the world. And it is questioning this everyday practice that leads to changed understandings" (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p.13). Critical participatory practice based on Freire's principle of conscientization is an epistemological worldview that confronts manifestations of power within the status quo. In this research study bringing awareness to the status quo that historically exists often unconsciously within the home-school interface relied on entering into a critically conscious space. Ledwith and Springett (2010) write that through the process of becoming critical autonomy and empowerment follow. They go on to say, "True empowerment, however, is not an individual state, but a

collective state, which is why Freire stressed that true liberation involves a collective process if it is to be transformative" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 19). Feminist author and activist bell hooks (1994) suggests that discussion with each other is the unit of social change, while Freire (1976) describes dialogue as an expression of our being. Through the process of conscientization that involved participants in storying, questioning, problematizing and reflecting through dialogue led to personal reflexive lenses to re-see, re-do and transform thinking, thereby transforming practices.

Gwen, in her post-interview revealed a glimpse into how through experiencing the process of conscientization over time had paved the way for her own personal epistemological and ontological transformations:

To be perfectly honest I feel like it's just the beginning for me, this research. In my journal I asked over 50 questions. That's just the beginning if we can start asking questions and shake things up and not just go through our days in our habits—but get out of our habits and talk to new people . . . I think we have to be storytellers. We just have to share our stories a bit more and before this year, we've had some very challenging experiences in school and we never did anything about them. So story tellers, we've gotta keep telling our stories about what this has done for us and how it's a part of us and how we can have great conversations with people for our little people.

Four months later, Gwen presented her research experiences to a B.Ed. class and further shared:

I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but it was a new birth as a mother. It's a ripple effect that creates waves. Kim is so beautiful about being open to hearing our stories. The research community and the journaling in the research study allowed us to go

to deep places and keep asking questions. I now talk to everyone about home-school connections . . . I now understand their [teachers'] voice—their perspective. I used to feel hopeless [home-school connections], but now I know I can communicate. (Presentation, October 16)

The power of coming together in third space over time to build *communitas* required leaning in to listening, learning and attending to each other with care, compassion and graciousness that helped us “create literacies of each other,” (T10) and I would also argue, literacies of ourselves.

In Freirean terms, learning to read the worlds of each other and ourselves through third space required looking inward before finding the agency or the literacy to ontologically respond to the outward world differently.

Four months after the research study, T1 shared her literacies of self and others with a B.Ed. class:

I learned a lot about me as a teacher and a person. Why would a parent want to open up to me if I didn't open up to them? I didn't want to be a teacher as above them, but as a person equal to them. Together in a safe place and expand that to others in my classroom. The home-school connection can be simple—I started by putting myself out there by being vulnerable. I face the same challenges as they do. We face challenges together as a team when it comes to "our" child. (Presentation, October 16)

Ledwith and Springett (2014) state: "As we begin to see the world in different ways, we change how we act in the world...fired by a sense of justice and hope for a better world" (p. 24). They also assert that engaging in participatory practice is about "engaging in our own transformations" (p. 201) before setting out to transform one's world. Transformations that lead

to being and practicing (saying, doing, relating) in the world differently. Transformations moving forward as a result of experiencing collective agency, but also becoming literate in one's own capacity and agency to continue to think and act critically to make change in one's world.

P4 and T7 in their post-interviews reflected on how the research experience would influence their future way of navigating the home-school interface as agents of change:

P4: I've had conversations with a lot of moms relating to parents and teachers and how we came together. There's been lots of conversations so that might be a normal thing . . . How can we make these ripples continue to spread? Having conversations with other parents . . . those of us that are in the group sharing our experiences, sharing what we've learned. Sharing how our thoughts have changed or how we would approach things now. How that would be different in the future.

T7: It's going to be a lifetime of learning and figuring out but I think my commitment is that I will continue to learn how to do that. It's not going to be something that I can say, "ok, I've got that, now I'm done." My commitment to be learning how to do that all the time. I will continue to take into account things like active listening, just developing the relationship with the parents so they feel comfortable coming in and talking to me about things . . . just coming alongside them and we're in this together and it's not something that you or I need to do alone.

T7's attention to ongoing learning about, from and with those who inhabit her home-school interface sheds light on how attention to diversity became an integral part of the shared research experience together. Kim posed a question in a March 2 journal entry "Who are we really and how do we get kids to understand and accept who they are and who the others are?" because she had learned earlier during the research gathering that Maleeka's daughter was

reluctant to bring her cultural food for lunch to school in fear of being ridiculed by her peers. This opened up a space for confronting personal and systemic biases, assumptions and judgements and for acknowledging that we need to learn from who is in our home-school interface if we are truly to be inclusive, appreciative of diversity and place pedagogical value on children's and families' cultural capital and funds of knowledge. Kim further wrote in her journal:

I do feel that children need to understand that in order to stop fearing we need the opportunities to have kids learn from each other about each other. But to me it needs to be authentic, not just a demonstration of the stereotype of the culture.

Manyak and Dantas (2010) remind teachers to avoid viewing children and families who share ethnicity through stereotypical lenses and instead learn about the particularities of their unique home lifeworld ways of being. TC2 confronted her biases around generalizing what cultures mean and represent in her journal on February 27:

Sometimes I think too much about traditions as holidays and celebrations but it is definitely more than just that. This makes me reflect on myself and thoughts around what makes up ones' culture. We have such a mesh of cultures . . . and must respect and nurture that.

Further stories and dialoguing emerged in subsequent research gatherings and participants' attention to diversities within the research space clearly contributed to the notion of weaving multi-voiced stories together into a tapestry, from which *communitas* and liminality were born.

T6 in her post-interview reflected upon the sense of tapestric connectedness that grew out of sharing from diverse voices:

We had such a culturally diverse group within this network and it was fascinating to hear their different backgrounds and that's not something that continues to deepen and reiterate that we all have these backgrounds and stories, but there is a common thread no matter where we come from on our globe or our experiences or what culture or language—that there is need for connection. The feeling of being connected and that there is a place for us all—it felt really comfortable.

Space was also created within the research community for finding affinity and belonging for Maleeka who had previously been marginalized in her school communities based on visible differences in dress, race, and language. Maleeka in her post-interview shared how finding acceptance and a place of belonging within her research cluster had also given her an increased sense of connectedness and belonging at her child's school:

It's Gwen because I don't have a relationship with other moms. That was really great. I feel like she want to be close to me and to know my culture. I feel like because I'm from a different country that was great. I feel like that we are getting close. Like you know when we meet at school if it wasn't for the research we would never talk to each other.

Based on their lived research experience, participants discussed and problematized how being authentically culturally responsive might look in schools and classrooms. T11 elaborated on this in her post-interview:

Just being very honoring of their backgrounds and what they're bringing to the table and have that much more empathy and understanding. Be more open and accepting of where families are and more open to what they are going to bring to the classroom.

Learning from and with diversity fostered a better understanding of how a tapestraic third space might similarly transpire in a classroom community as shared by T3 in her post-interview:

So many of the kids come in with their own strengths in terms of literacy. Just because they maybe can't read the words on a page doesn't mean that they aren't coming in with the most beautiful oral stories from either their culture or a grandparent that they've heard. Our ELL students . . . English to them is not their first language but they're coming in with their own type of literacy. How do we bring that out?

A home-school interface that is co-authored by diverse perspectives and invitational for cultural lifeworlds and families to contribute has the potential to further enrich curricula and nurture children's literacies of each other and themselves within classrooms, schools and their worlds beyond.

## **6.9 Summary**

"In education, critical participatory action research should assist people to make their practices and the consequences of their practices more educational, as well as more rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 113). Participants living and learning from and with each other through this critical participatory action research project learned that creating a space for home and school to relationally interact is ultimately a personal ontological project requiring deconstruction of the socialized taken-for-granted ways schools and homes, teachers and parents live and practice with each other. The participatory process of conscientization rooted in affect echoed Freire's belief that feelings generated by critical consciousness motivates collective action. Freire (1994) asserts that seeing life more critically motivates people to act together for change.

In this research study, any attention to classroom curriculum enrichment or children's literacy learning and development could only meaningfully happen once institutional boundaries between home and school and teacher and parent were made more permeable, gracious and

hospitable. Once traditional roles and ritualized ways of communicating were set aside, participants experienced tapestric connectivity as well as established intersubjectivity as a result of co-creating a communicative space where stories, dialogue, questions and reflections helped move them away from their prescribed roles into simply "beings in relation with each other" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 250) whose lives overlapped through a child. Beings in relation with each other also became a source of collective and personal empowerment. Empowerment is described by McLaren (2009) as "not only setting the learning for participants to understand the world around them, but also to generate the courage to bring about change" (p. 74). It is about embodying a literacy of self and others by engaging in praxis that first names the world in order to transform the world.

Entering into conscientization and becoming critical is liberating when it is a collective process (Shor & Freire, 1987). In an effort to capture the collective experience and to represent the rational side of transformational insights and thinking, participants drew upon more imaginative and intuitive semiotics to embody their experiences through the use of metaphor which Ledwith and Springett (2014) say is "important in understanding our relationship to the whole" (p. 191). A hybrid discourse surfaced from the participant's data through metaphors that helped move the research story forward through time representing the embodiment of their collective experience. Miano (2004) helps to further theorize how these metaphors have surfaced from the data to represent the hybridity that developed a new shared research Discourse. Sharing diverse ideas deepens the human bond among those who share in this diversity providing opportunities "for transformation through the use of hybrid forms of expression, which likewise help foment assertions of hybrid forms of identity" (p. 310); identities formed and reformed through institutional and cultural practices (Ledwith & Springett, 2014). This collective



participatory experience represented a source of relational solidarity among the participants who moved back into their own lives with heightened critical awareness along with an increased sense of courageous agency to continue opening doors, building bridges, making ripples and more mindfully reading and responding to the tapestraic nature of their world.

## **Chapter 7: Concluding with Lingering Thoughts**

But is there ever such a thing as a whole story, or an artist's triumph, or a right way to look through the glass? It all depends on where the light falls. (Burton, 2016, p. 387)

This critical participatory action research story is about a process rather than a product (Herr & Anderson, 2015). It is a story about a collection of people identifying as teachers and parents who gathered on five occasions over four months. They each brought their lived stories and experiences along with a sense of inquiry, curiosity, and openness into what was at first, an unknown territory. Our mutually constructed third space became a living canvas or an Aokian "space of generative possibilities" (Pinar, 2005, p. 73) that helped shape and invent a hybrid Discourse born of and perpetually belonging to that particular space and time. A process characterized further by Charmaz (2014) as: "Novel aspects of experience give rise to new interpretations and actions . . . this view of emergence can sensitize social justice researchers to study change in new ways" (p. 326). Curated within the time and location of our "throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005, p. 151) lives a sense of unity and affinity memorialized in affect. Our lived and co-created canvas is a vessel from which metaphors have emerged to help tell the story.

### **7.1 Doors**

The historically created and institutionally defined interface between home and school is enacted in our lived roles and practices. Within this space, there are idealized and generalized expectations placed on roles of teacher, parent, family, and student. Prior to the research study participants had come to understand their roles and lived within them accordingly. Doors, as a metaphor, act as a demarcation representing a metaphysical entity; an in-between-ness that

imposes habitus and determines belonging in or out of a Discourse through policies that can separate, position, and dictate practices (sayings, doings, relatings) on either side of the door.

Exosystemic policies meant to bring home and school together in general do more to alienate, exclude, marginalize, silence and keep the space/terrain between home and school tenuous, uncertain, inhospitable, and hegemonic especially for those who appear outwardly as not sharing the same cultural and social capital as the institution historically has privileged. Structural events typically enacted through ritualistic activities determined by the school open the metaphoric and physical doors for purposes of engaging and involving families with their children's teacher and school. These structural methods traditionally have become pivotal moments when assumptions and biases about families, parents and children's homes are either further reinforced or disrupted. They are also pivotal moments that reinforce parents' sense of whether or not they see themselves as active members belonging or not belonging within that space.

In the case of this research, the image of doors represents how participants story their lived experiences metaphorically. T2 reflected in her post-interview: "I learned that I'm not as open-door as I thought I was . . . I just need to welcome them in different ways than what I've done in the past. Not as my helper, but as my partner." Critically recognizing and confronting the historical reasons why such doors exist is foundational to realizing that the space between home and school is actually much more malleable when understood as a social construction with possibility rather than restriction. In doing so, the home-school connective spaces can also be determined contextually, socially, interactively and responsively when co-created by those who desire a more meaningful, inclusive and relationally generative space.

## 7.2 Tapestry

When spaces between home and school are viewed as tapestraic or as locations for interweaving diverse narrative threads, then boundaries defining such spaces become more mercurial and less policy and rule-bound. Potentialities exist in seeing one's classroom community expansive and inclusive of all who want to be in relation with those who share a caring role for their children. Within relational and gracious space lives potential for disrupting biases and assumptions that act as barriers, obstruct communication and impose identities on others. This requires a shift from a closed technocratic image of the home-school interface space to one of open reciprocal hospitality.

Third space became a transformative site for learning and shifting practices and for the enunciation of a hybrid tapestraic narrative woven into a representational canvas of *communitas* and liminality. Tapestry as a metaphor represents the interplay that occurred over time as participants wove together their respective knowledges and wisdom leading into heightened connected understandings or literacies of other and of self. As Gwen reflected upon her experience in a post-research presentation: "We are beyond museum pieces that force us to look at each other, but a tapestry that has us weave together." (Researcher Field Notes, October 16)

In this research experience, third space created conditions for participants to deconstruct and reconstruct how parents and teachers view their own and each other's roles and how they (re)position each other within the interface. Multiple points of convergence and connecting in third space over time fostered critical reflection and fueled new praxis. Experiencing collective and personal conscientization led to *communitas* and liminality as a result of:

- i. intentional nurturing of a third space for tapestraic multi-voiced and egalitarian sharing of personal and professional knowledges, stories, literacies and experiences;

- ii. conscious elimination of hierarchy because roles were foregrounded by mutual interests in learning from each other;
- iii. starting with the personal where story telling served as empathetic mirrors and windows; and,
- iv. collective critical purpose that questioned the status quo that have influenced our everyday practices (sayings, doings, relatings) within the home-school interface.

### **7.3 Bridges**

As a collective experience, "awareness [conscientization] has caused bridges between home and school" (Participant Field Notes, June 14). Experiencing *communitas* in a tapestraic space informed participants' enhanced understandings of their own situatedness within the home-school interface along with displays of empathy to deepen their literacies of each other. T2 in her post-interview spoke of her transformed understanding of the existence of the space between home and school: "It made me think about the mesosystem . . . that connection between family and school and home and whether we nurture it or not, it's there." The home-school interface represents an existing space whether or not it is acknowledged or even realized. It is a space that can represent the most complex of geography as Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) contends, or a generative space that enhances and nurtures a connected knowingness that ultimately benefits the well-being of all involved. The most important realization is coming to understand that the way a space is authored is ultimately up to those who inhabit it together.

Bridge as a metaphor represents how participants came to understand that our tapestraic space was a reflection of a collectively-created and contextualized, research-driven process that may not be replicable outside of such a concerted project. Participants also came to realize that there is no one bridge that connects to all families and teachers in the same way. For some

families, the long standing ritualized school practices are enough of an access point into their children's school experience and into the home-school interface. For others these pathways, for a multitude of reasons, are blocked and access to their child's school and the home-school interface restricted. Bridge building as a metaphor also encompasses a need to challenge those taken-for-granted practices that in effect have served as blockades for some parents and families. Safety in bridge building is about relational trust first - one to one, face to face, human to human, as summarized by P10: "When we are able to see others as human beings we are able to trust more easily." (Post-Interview).

For some, authentic and productive home-school partnerships are not something that can be imposed, organized and prescribed for teachers and parents according to externally created policy-driven events and programs that assume homogeneous responses from all involved. Rather, authentic and productive home-school partnerships are best developed contextually with sensitivity to the cultural and social capital and resources that live within families and communities. In the case of this research study, it was the process of conscientization that led to heightened sensitivity around systemic and personal biases and assumptions rooted in historical and socially constructed ways of being within the home-school interface. "Participatory practice begins in lived reality, in our being in the world. And it is questioning this everyday practice that leads to changed understandings" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 13). It took time to create a safe space of connected knowing for participant's stories to act as mediators in questioning, problematizing and reimagining new ways of living and practicing alongside each other.

#### **7.4 Ripples**

As T6 in her post-interview articulated: "We've lived our way into a new way of thinking—how could you live your way backwards?" Questioning the status quo leads to

transformations in thinking and in practices. The image of the moment after a stone drops into still water illustrates ripples as the final metaphor representing the experiences of disruption and transformation. Third space offered an opportunity for participants to be storytellers and also become aware of other worldviews and diverse literacies through the luxury of time for dialogue and reflection. The process of conscientization, much like a dropped stone into water, gave way to *communitas* and liminality that led to transformations in thinking about roles, positionalities of self and others within the home-school interface. Further self-transformation identified in terms of “literacy of self” as described by T7 during a research gathering: "Being aware of what your literacies are. You need to know what those are to influence and shape—knowing and reflecting on what those literacies are and acting positively and just being aware of [yourself]" (Field Notes, May 17).

Shifts in thinking moved beyond school-centricity to context-centricity towards family-centered notions of practice. Transformations in practice lead to saying, doing and relating differently in the world, and in doing so, also lead to taking informed action within the world. Discovering new found agency, efficacy and hope as change-makers compelled participants to take action beyond the research space. Encompassing a sense of self-determination and efficacy to be able to navigate the mercurial boundaries that inevitably will shape future encountered spaces between home and school. Roles, identities and social practices were reframed and reconstructed by participants taking ownership of authoring their own stories moving forward (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). As P7, reflected in her journal at the conclusion of the research study: "We are removing the door/barriers to connect through our diversities. We are giving awareness to a new way of thinking and connecting. Bonds, ripples, connected, values, school, home, community" (June 14). Engaging in processes of collective and individual reflection

supports participants to convey "agency in their narratives as they engage in personal change" and by doing so, "collectively promot[ing] social change" (Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 43).

### **7.5 Literacies of Diversity within a Tapestraic Curriculum**

In order for curriculum to be truly culturally responsive and open to families' funds of knowledge, it calls upon teachers to do more than appropriate what they think represents their children's home lifeworlds and communities. Teachers cannot do this on their own. Parents most likely will not impose this upon teachers. Family funds of knowledge accessed as social and educational capital can feed into a curriculum based on the contextual strengths and assets of all learners. The significance of knowing families and what they bring in order for this to happen require disruptions of the hetero-normative way of viewing curriculum as a one-way transmission of knowledge. When the home-school interface invites and nurtures diverse perspectives, cultural lifeworlds and families' funds of knowledge, it is more likely to support and honor children's culturally responsive learning both in the community and in school. When children are invited to use their home lifeworld knowledge as pedagogical resources to further their school literacy learning, their increased affect leads to learning infused with engagement, interest, agency, and confidence.

In this research study, when participants expanded their understanding of literacies from autonomous school focused literacy to ideological sociocultural definitions of literacy (Street, 1984) their thinking about children's literacy development and learning transformed. Participants "created literacies of each other" (T10, Journal Entry, May17) by becoming diversity literate. They learned about each other's diverse family cultures and ways of being that fostered better understandings of how this might also transpire in classroom communities. Several participants collaboratively designed and enacted school based literacy events that invited children to use



their lifeworld knowledge to further their school literacy learning, as well as parent/family funds of knowledge as pedagogical resources in classrooms.

If we do not learn from each other within the home-school interface, how can we truly be inclusive and diversity positive while appropriately responding to our children's lifeworld funds of knowledge as a means to authentically make space for their literacies of self and others to grow? Leaning on each other as parents and families who are literate knowers of their children and teachers who are literate knowers of pedagogy holds the potential to enrich, expand and breathe life into what might become more of a tapestraic third space curriculum.

## **7.6 Disempowering “Should” through Discovering Literacies of Self**

An interest in social justice means attentiveness to ideas and actions concerning fairness, equity, equality, democratic processes, status, hierarchy, and individual collective rights and obligations. It signifies thinking about being human, creating good societies and a better world . . . It means taking a critical stance toward actions, organizations and social institutions . . . require[s] looking at both realities and ideals. Thus, contested meanings of 'shoulds' and 'oughts' come into play. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 326)

This research journey ignited long ago within a lived moment when the taken-for-grantedness of my role and positionality as teacher was challenged and disrupted. I now realize how much I allowed my membership in the prevailing normative Discourse of school "to do much of [my] thinking for [me]" (Douglas, as cited in Gee, 1996, p. 77) as revealed in the language I used with parents in that moment of “should.” Up until then, my teacher identity and voice had gone unchallenged and unquestioned as I lived out my practice within the traditional grammar of school also located within a space that I was not even aware existed. A space I have come to identify as the home-school interface; a third space alive with whatever biases and

assumptions define its Discourse and determine its spatial boundaries. That moment ultimately triggered an idiosyncratic desire to better understand what power-full forces helped shape my identity and voice as “teacher.”

Literacy, according to Freire is:

a narrative for agency through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves present as agents for engaging in struggles around both relations of meaning and of power. To be literate is *not* to be free; it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future. (As cited in Giroux, 1987, pp. 11-12)

Freire and Macedo (1987) write that "language is the mediating force of knowledge, [and] it is also knowledge itself" (p. 53). Shoulds and oughts freely rolled off my tongue at one time as I positioned myself with authority towards parents and families within the home-school interface. I realize now that until contested these words represented in Freirean terms, a much more substantial obliviousness. Illiteracy, according to Macedo and Freire (1987), is the functional inability to read the world and one's life in a critical and historically relational way. Having been colonized myself as a student and teacher in what I now realize was the dominant voice of institutional status quo, I lacked critical meta-awareness of being able to read the world from beyond my own perspective (Souto-Manning, 2010). Having "emerged from my world to know it better" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 68) has led me to a deeper literacy of my once own monologic view of the world. "Literacy is the language of possibility, enabling learners to recognize and understand their voices within a multitude of discourses in which they must deal" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 54).

## 7.7 Contributions, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

As posed in the introduction to this dissertation, the voices and questions of families are often missing from educational research and dialogue about how to support children's learning in schools. Historically, research has focused *on* parents, rather than research *with* parents (Pushor, 2007). This study positioned parents and teachers together as co-researchers and co-contributors in an effort to explore the potential reciprocal benefits of such a dynamic process. The study's critical participatory design explored a gap in the literature around how such research might not only inform, but strengthen the argument for continued exploration of how family-centred practices could be further explored within the public school system.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017) has called upon schools to explore more meaningful partnerships as part of its overarching "7+1" strategic framework for innovating education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The framework identifies "seven learning principles coupled with three fundamental arenas of innovation, including the pedagogical core, learning leadership and partnerships" (OECD, 2017, p. 41). Within its framework, the OECD specifically attends to the notion of partnerships:

Creating wider partnerships should be a constant endeavor of the 21st century learning environment, looking outwards and avoiding isolation. Partners represent potentially very fruitful sources of expertise and knowledge. Partners extend the educational workforce, the resources and the sites for learning. Working with partners is to "invest" in the social, intellectual and professional capital on which a thriving learning organization depends. It also contributes to...one of the key Learning Principles promoting "horizontal connectedness." Such connections should include parents and families, not as passive

supporters of schools but as active partners in the educational process. (OECD, 2017, p. 44)

The conversation around "parents as partners" in education continues onward into the future. Currently, the OECD (2017) strategic framework for innovating education is powerfully influencing the perspectives of educational leadership, policy and teacher professional development. Through the OECD document, the discourse around school improvement reaffirms, positions and defines parents as active resourceful partners in the educational process. As demonstrated through this research study, when parents are given the opportunity to position themselves as partners with teachers in conditions that disrupt hierarchy and hegemony, they have a better chance at self-determining what it means for them to be authentically engaged as partners. This alone calls for more research that gives equal voice to parents and teachers about what it means to "include parents and families, not as passive supporters of school, but as active partners in the educational process" (OECD, 2017, p. 44). Research that values and builds upon both teacher and parent voice equally invites new discoveries and perspectives on the interface between home and school.

When considering limitations of qualitative research in general, it is important to be reminded that generalizability takes a back seat to transferability as an overarching goal especially in participatory action research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Herr & Anderson, 2015). This research story describes a contextualized experience among 25 individuals over the course of five months. It provides a view from one lens that may find resonance in other similar situations. In the words of Stake (1986): "It is a *unique* situation in some respects, but ordinary in other respects. Readers recognize similarities with situations of their own. Perhaps they are stimulated to think of old problems in a new way" (pp. 98-99). To attempt to address the issue of

transferability, thick rich description of the participants and context provide a means for readers to find relevance with and applicability to their own settings and experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Although researcher subjectivity and bias as an insider and co-participant were addressed through ongoing reflection, this arguably poses limitations on the analysis and final interpretation of the research story.

#### **7.7.1 In changing the story we change the world.**

"Story moves us, informs us, confirms or expands our memories and identities, and calls us to take action" (Cunningham, 2015, p. 6). Search through re-searching has led to discovering cracks and openings in my lived story of being a teacher among other teachers and parents over the years. Co-writing a new story with my co-researchers has helped me to understand the power-full forces at play that help shape our identity kits (Discourses) as teachers and parents within a larger historically constructed institution. Coming to realize that through the hegemonic power embedded in school as a socio-cultural institution, our identities, roles and expectations of each other have been normatively predetermined and rarely challenged in the day-to-dayness of our practices (Giroux, 1987; Kemmis, et al., 2014; McCarthey & Moje, 2002).

This critical participatory research design directly confronted and silenced the inherent hierarchical relationships that prevail within the home-school interface. Research participants set aside their pre-determined role (parent or teacher) within the research space and had equal voice and opportunity to overtly examine, question, problematize and contest the very forces that had socialized them into their roles in the first place. Conscientization, as a cyclical process of action and reflection integrating new knowledge and worldviews, presented a way of "unlearning the current and taken for granted truths of school" (Pushor, 2015, p. 224). Participatory practice is about engaging in one's own transformation. Becoming literate to one's world is about recovering

voice to be able to retell one's history (Giroux, 1987). Critical participatory action research as a methodology, "emancipatory in essence and founded on an ideology of participatory democracy . . . work[s] *with* not *on* people, with the explicit intention of equalizing power relations [to] bring about transformative change" (Ledwith & Springett, 2014, p. 200). Participant field notes from the fourth research gathering reflect a movement towards deeper understandings of both self and each other within a co-constructed discursive space:

We need to be aware of our own literacies and how they influence and shape those who are part of our community . . . new literacies of sharing our thought processes, struggles . . . not defining or judging people by their issues or current situation, but being mindful that everyone has a story, a history, a reason for being where they are now. (Participant Field Notes, May 17)

"Rather than suggesting that knowledge leads (or should lead to transformation) . . . transformation (as a form of practical labor) leads to knowledge" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 173). Fundamental to critical participatory action research is the understanding that it is a social and educational process that questions the status quo through a process of individual and collective transformation (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Kemmis, et al., 2014). Knowledge generated from within this research process is local knowledge based on Yosso's (2005) definition of cultural wealth or capital that contributes to hybrid spaces where new knowledge is born of narratives intertwining into something new (Aoki, 1996/2005f). Participants' narratives braided together in a gracious space as they became storytellers, story listeners, and co-authors of their time well-spent together. Knowledge resulting from a social process of collaborative learning realized collaboratively by participants "joined together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 20).

The overarching aim of critical PAR is not to produce generalizations about the best way to do things or to generalize findings that might be transferable to another context. Its aim is helping participants to understand how things have come to be in this context and how things could evolve or ripple out into the future. Critical PAR is itself a social practice that aims to transform other social practices, less about contributing to knowledge generalizations and more about "the extent to which it contributes to history—to changing, for the better, the world we live and practice in" (Kemmis, et al., 2014, p. 27). Ultimately, "to shape history is to be present in it, not merely represented in it" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 65).

"But just the willingness to sit in the tensions, the boths/ands of the various worlds we inhabit, can make for change - for ourselves and the varying communities in which we travel." (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 159). In this way, we collectively re-authored our story and changed our world.

For as we share the care of a child with her parents we engage in a mimetic and empathic relation with them as well as with the child, gaining access to their hope as well as to their habits of nurture. It is not enough to know other people's children. We must know, share a world with, the other people who love that child, wildly or tentatively, desperately, ambivalently, or tenderly. (Grumet, 1988, p. 179)

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Recruitment Email and Letter for Teacher Participants**

Dear Colleagues,

Attached please find an information letter inviting you to consider joining with me in a participatory action research project examining home-school connections that I will be facilitating from February to June. Please see the attached letter that provides more information on my research project. If you are interested, please email back and I will arrange a time to speak with you further about the study.

Thanks so much for considering joining with me and please contact me with any further questions.

Donna Kozak  
PhD Candidate – UBC Okanagan  
250-718-5332



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Dear Colleagues,

I am currently a PhD candidate at UBC Okanagan embarking on the research phase of my program. I am looking for K-4 teachers, teacher candidates who may be assigned to your classroom in the New Year, and parents/family member participants to join in with me as co-researchers in this research study from February to June, 2017.

My research interest is focused on examining the larger topic of home-school connections and specifically exploring the potential of purposefully building relationships between family\* members and teachers within the first 5 years of elementary school. (\*Family members are any adult(s) who are in the role of caring for a child on an ongoing basis).

I will be using a critical participatory action research methodology (Kemmis, McTaggart, Nixon, 2014) which means I will be inviting my participants to be co-researchers with me; in other words, I will not be doing research on you, but rather with you. Critical participatory action research invites participants to question and investigate more deeply the taken for granted ways we go about our everyday practices; in this case, specifically how teachers and schools interact with parents/family members and homes in the service of supporting their children's development and education.

To participate in this project, you will also be asked to invite family member(s) (up to 2) of the children in your classroom this year to partner with you and also participate as co-researchers in this project. The goal of the research is to create the conditions for teachers and families to come to know each other and learn from each other in ways that will help enrich the curriculum in your classroom by drawing on the resources that your families and their communities may have to offer. You will be co-creating an inquiry project within your classroom with your co-researchers that will focus on drawing on all of your funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) which are the cultural, personal, professional, vocational, and background knowledges you all possess. This process would also support ways to inform how you take up aspects of the redesigned B.C. curriculum especially around the personal and social awareness competencies in relation to place-based learning. This will also be a chance to explore what it means to take a family-centered approach to engaging, communicating and relating with the families of the



children in your classroom (Dunst, 2002; Hamilton, Roach & Riley, 2003; Keyser, 2006; McWilliam, Maxwell & Sloper, 1999).

My overarching research question is:

*How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants: (i) foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; (ii) impact the interface relations between home and school; and, (3) enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?*

Your role and commitment in this research project will include:

- extending an invitation to the parents/family members of children in your current classroom that you would like to support, get to know better, and/or you feel would contribute enriching funds of knowledge to inform your curriculum planning
- if you have a teacher candidate assigned to your classroom for practicum between January and March or in April, inviting your candidate to join in the research study as a participant
- if you are a teacher candidate, participating in the study for the duration of your practicum or for the duration of the research study
- being interviewed by me pre and post research study (February and June, 2017) for 20 minutes each time
- helping to co-plan and attend four to five - 90 minute after school research gatherings with all other teacher and family member partners over five months (February to June, 2017 – gatherings will be held in locations other than school sites)
- keeping a reflection journal that will be used for data analysis at the end of the research study (20 minutes after each gathering)
- partnering with your parent/family member partners to explore ways to draw on your collective local, personal, and professional funds of knowledge to enrich the curriculum in your classroom (this might lead to specific learning activities in your classroom depending on what works best for you and your partners)
- participating as a co-researcher during the 90 minute research gatherings to determine topics, questions, analyze data and personally/collectively reflect on the process

Critical participatory action research invites participants to help co-design the research study. Since this study is also part of a doctoral research dissertation, an initial proposed framework will inform the structure and timeline of the study. Within the study itself, you will have the opportunity to collectively inform and further develop elements of the research study.

Ultimately, I will draw on our collective experiences together by collecting, then using the data to inform how my research question will be answered in the form of a doctoral dissertation.

## **Proposed Research Project Timeline, Topics and Methods**

### ***February, 2017*** - interviews

Audio  
recording

Pre-project individual 20 minute interview with Donna. Interview will be audio recorded, then transcribed.

### ***February, 2017*** – research gathering #1

Audio  
recording, video  
& photo  
documentation,  
field notes,  
artifacts

- The 90 minute research group gatherings will follow iterative spirals of learning and action (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014). Participatory iterative spirals of learning and action include reflecting on our contextual lived reality, co-planning, acting locally, observing and reflecting on our lived experiences, co-planning, acting locally, observing and reflecting on our lived experiences, then taking action with others in a wider context.
- The research group gathering with all participants will focus on building a safe discursive space through story dialogue (Ledwith & Springett, 2014), surfacing questions through appreciative inquiry (Ledwith & Springett, 2014), creating dialogue and conversations that matter (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Ledwith & Springett, 2014), and critical reflection (Ledwith & Springett, 2014).
- ***Proposed focus questions:*** What are our stories of school learning? What are our stories of home learning? What are our stories of home-school connections? What might reimagined home-school connections be like? What kinds of literacies do young children bring with them to school? How might working together help enact aspects of the redesigned B.C. curriculum content and competencies?
- Co-create inquiry questions among co-researchers that help **plan** and **lead** to engaging professional and family funds of knowledge to enrich curriculum for children's learning at each site
- set date, topics, questions, location for next gathering

### ***March, April, May, (June – optional)*** – research gatherings #2, #3, #4, and optional #5

-Research group gatherings with participants

Audio  
recording, video  
& photo  
documentation,  
field notes,  
artifacts

***Potential focus questions:*** What does it mean to be family-centered? What does it mean to be culturally responsive? How can we invite families' funds of knowledge into our curriculum and build on our students' backgrounds to enrich their literacy learning? What are home literacies and how can they help us build on school literacy learning?

-share observations among and between site partners

-reflect in co-researching sites, then together as a group on successes, stretches and next steps - What did we learn and now what?

-plan next steps to **plan** and **lead** engaging family funds of knowledge to enrich curriculum for children's learning at each site

-set date and topics for next gathering

***March, April, May*** – Classroom visits

Audio  
recording, video  
& photo  
documentation,  
field notes,  
artifacts

Possible visits to your classroom if you and your parent/family member plan a learning activity together (this will be decided upon at each of the research gatherings). One to three visits are possible during this time period and if classroom visits occur, Donna will be collecting data in the form of photos, videos and field notes of the learning activities. The visits will be no longer than 60 minutes each time. Permission from children's parents in these classrooms will be collected for these specific visits.

***June, July, 2017*** – Final individual interviews

Audio recording

-Final individual interview with Donna. Interview will be audio-recorded, then transcribed.

Thank you for your interest! I hope you are excited as I am to be venturing down this inquiry path into a topic, that as educators, we often do not address.

For more information, please feel free to contact me either by phone (250-718-5332) or by email ([kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca)).

Donna

## **Appendix B: Recruitment Email and Letter for Family Member Participants**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for contacting me with interest in joining a research study that will look at how home and school connect to improve learning for your children.

Attached please find an information letter inviting you to consider joining with your child's teacher in a participatory action research project that I will be conducting from February to June. Please see the attached letter that provides more information on my research project.

Thanks so much for considering joining with us and please contact me with any further questions.

Donna Kozak

PhD Candidate – UBC Okanagan

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Dear Families,

My name is Donna Kozak and I have been a teacher in Central Okanagan School District for the past 27 years. My current position is in the area of early learning and literacy where I work with preschool educators, strongstart facilitators and teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 4 to support their teaching. I am also currently a PhD student at UBC Okanagan and am looking for help with my research study. My research study is exploring how home and school/ teachers and family members might work differently together. I believe this is an area that has not been explored enough and the relationships between home and school have not changed much over the past few decades.

My research is using an approach called "critical participatory action research" which means I will not be researching about how home and school work together, rather I will be researching *with* teachers and family members about how home and school can work together differently to best understand and meet the needs of their children in school.

You are receiving this invitation because your child's teacher is interested in being part of this research study and needs parent or family member partners to be able to take part. The research study will look at the kinds of knowledge parents, families, homes and communities can offer their child's learning at school. Teachers who are interested in this research would like to

know more about how to build a curriculum that values and honors the backgrounds their students bring with them to school.

My overarching research question is:

*How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants: (i) foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; (ii) impact the interface relations between home and school; and, (3) enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?*

Your participation in this research project will include:

- being interviewed by me pre and post research study for a maximum of 30 minutes (once in February and once in June, 2017)
- helping to plan and attend 4 to 5 - 90 minute after school research gatherings with all other teacher and family member partners over 5 months (once a month from February to June, 2017 – gatherings will be held in locations other than school sites)
- keeping a reflection journal or notes that will be used for data analysis at the end of the research study (this should take about 20 minutes after each gathering)
- partnering with your child's teacher to explore ways to include your knowledge and your family's background and cultural knowledge as part of the curriculum in your child's classroom (this might involve spending time in your child's classroom for an amount of time that works best for you)
- participating as a co-researcher to determine topics, questions, analyze data and personally/collectively reflect on the process (at the 90 minute research gatherings once a month between February and June, 2017)

Critical participatory action research invites participants to help co-design the research study. During the study, we will create the topics, questions and activities together. After the research is completed, my job will be to use what we have learned together to complete a research report (dissertation) for my PhD program.

#### Data Collection Methods

#### Proposed Research Project Timeline and Data Collection Methods

**February, 2017** - interviews

#### Audio recording

Pre-project individual interview with all participants with Donna. Interviews will be tape recorded, then transcribed.

Audio recording, video & photo documentation, field notes, artifacts

**February, 2017** – research gathering #1

The research group gatherings will follow a process of discussing and reflecting on the way we have become used to partnering between home and school to be able to

consider other ways of partnering. (See figure 1 below). You and your research partner (your child's teacher) will together learn about new ways to support your child's education at school.

- Proposed focus questions: What might reimagined home-school connections be like? What kinds of literacies do young children bring with them to school? How might working together help enact aspects of the redesigned B. C. curriculum content and competencies?
- Set date, topics, questions, location for next gathering
- ***March, April, May, (June – optional)***– research gatherings #2, #3, #4, #5

-Research group gathering -Potential topic: What does it mean to be family-centered?  
-Other topics and questions will be created together around what we are learning and next steps

-Possible visits to your child's classroom if you and your child's teacher plan a learning activity together (this will be decided upon at each of the research gatherings). One to three visits are possible during this time period and if classroom visits occur, Donna will be collecting data in the form of photos, videos and field notes of the learning activities. The visits will be no longer than 60 minutes each time. Permission from children's parents in these classrooms will be collected for these specific visits.

Audio  
recording, video  
& photo  
documentation,  
field notes,  
artifacts

Audio recording

***June, July, 2017*** – Final individual interviews

-Final individual interviews with all participants with Donna – audio-recorded, then transcribed.

If you are interested in participating in this research project with your child's teacher, please contact me - Donna Kozak at (kozado@shaw.ca).<mailto:donna.kozak@sd23.bc.ca> You will not be paid for participating in this research, however, if you need childcare or transportation, arrangements may be able to be made to support you. (\$20 per research gathering for childcare up to \$100 maximum for 5 gatherings).

If you would like more information, please either call (250-718-5332) or email. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have to help you make your decision to participate.

Thank you so much for your interest,

Donna Kozak, PhD Candidate  
University of B.C. - Okanagan  
[kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca) 250.718.5332

## Appendix C: Participant Information Notice and Consent Forms



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**Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections**

***Information notice and informed consent for family member, teacher and teacher candidate research participants***

### **Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Leyton Schnellert, Assistant Professor, UBCO Education

Email: [leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca](mailto:leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca) Phone: (250) 807.9176

### **Co-Investigator/ research facilitator:**

Donna Kozak, PhD Candidate, UBCO Education, College of Graduate Studies

Email: [kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca) Phone: (250) 718.5332

### **Background**

The voices and questions of families are often missing from educational research and dialogue about how to support children's learning and literacy development. Educators and family members can have many beliefs, attitudes, and fears about each other that might prevent them coming together in support of their children's learning at school. This research study will explore what it means for teachers and parents\* to partner together and explore their children's literacy learning through a relational approach.

This research is part of a PhD thesis and is supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) scholarship (Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships – Doctoral). A report will be publicly available on the internet via a digital storage place at UBC, called cIRcle.

(\*The term family and family member will be used to broadly reference those adults who provide immediate care for children and, therefore, interact with the school).



## **Overall research study purpose**

The goal of this research is to study the impact and implications of co-creating a discursive space that brings together family and teacher funds of knowledge and how this might contribute to children's literacy learning and overall school experience.

## **Research question**

The following question will guide this research:

How will the co-creation of discursive spaces among researcher, teacher and family member participants: (i) foster integration of their respective funds of knowledge around children's literacy development; (ii) impact the interface relations between home and school; and, (3) enrich the lived curriculum in the teacher participants' classrooms?

## **Why am I being asked to participate in this study?**

Your interest in exploring the topic means you are willing to spend time on learning more about how home and school can work together for the benefit of children's learning.

## **Who else will be participating in this study?**

Participants will include interested teachers from Central Okanagan Public Schools No. 23 in K-4 classrooms, an interested parent or family member (up to 2) from the interested teachers' classrooms, and interested teacher candidates who are in practicum in one of the teacher participant classrooms.

## **What will I be asked to do?**

- If you choose to participate in this study you will participate in 4 or 5 research gatherings with other teacher/family member partners over a 5 month period. Each gathering will be no longer than 90 minutes long and will take place on a weekday between 4:00 to 5:30 pm or a time decided upon with the other participants. You will be provided with nutritional snacks at these gatherings. You may also decide with your teacher/family member partner to work together on a literacy project within your children's classroom between research gatherings.
- An initial individual 20 minute audio-recorded interview will take place between the research facilitator (Donna Kozak) and you. Within this first interview you will be asked open-ended questions as well as suggested input around the content and design of the research study. The interview will be arranged at a location that is convenient for you. The interview will be transcribed by a transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement and the transcripts will be used as research data.
- A final individual 20 minute audio-recorded interview will take place between the research facilitator (Donna Kozak) and you at the conclusion of the five month research study timeline. The final interview will ask open-ended questions about your experiences in the research. It will

also be held at a location most convenient for you. The interview will be transcribed and used as research data.

- You will keep a reflection journal between research gatherings to record any questions, thinking, ideas or insights. These journals will be collected for research data, then returned to you when the research has been written up.
- This study will research how our participation together might create different ways of relating to each other, new ways of supporting children in their literacy learning, and how curriculum in classrooms can be made richer by the funds of knowledge children bring with them to school.
- At each research gathering we will co-create the agenda for our next gathering. We will be researching our experiences and our learning together through sharing our stories and reflecting on the activities that we together create. Through your partnership with each other, you may also plan and carry out specific literacy learning activities in your (child's) classroom between our research gatherings. During these classroom activities, the researcher may attend and take field notes, photographs and video of the learning activities. Parent permission for their children to be part of these activities will be secured prior to any research classroom visits. Children in the classrooms will also be asked for their assent to participate in the observations, photos and video recordings.
- The research gatherings will be either audio or camera recorded or both. If there are any related activities that occur in classrooms, notes will be taken by the research facilitator and photos of learning activities and artifacts will also be taken. The information collected through the interviews, the research gatherings and related activities in classrooms will be transcribed by a transcriptionist who has signed a confidentiality agreement and used as data to inform the research study. Any documents or photos as a result of our research gatherings will also be used as research data.
- Summaries from each research gathering will be made available to you to review to ensure accuracy.

### **Are there any risks involved with taking part in this research?**

- There should not be anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. The likelihood of physical, psychological, emotional and/or social risk is low. There are no risks regarding physical harm, deception, coercion, or conflicts of interest. This is the case because the protocol does not involve physical dimensions, there is no intent to deceive, and participation at all levels is on a voluntary basis.
- If you are ever asked a question that seems sensitive or personal, you do not have to answer it if you do not wish. If you are no longer able or interested in participating in the research, you are able to withdraw without explanation or fear of criticism or penalty. If you wish to withdraw, simply contact the research facilitator via email ([kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca)) to request withdrawal. Your interviews will be deleted. The notes from your participation in the research gatherings will not be deleted as they are part of the group data already collected. You will NOT have to explain why you want to leave the research study.

- As a teacher, by participating in this research, there will not be any negative effects on your relationship with your employer or with other colleagues. As a teacher candidate, there will not be any negative effects on the outcome of your practicum or your relationship with School District No. 23 whether you choose to participate or not participate.
- Teacher candidates will have the option of either staying with the research study past their practicum completion or completing the research upon their practicum completion. Teacher candidates will also have the option of withdrawing themselves and their data from the research without reprisal at any time.

### **Confidentiality**

- Anonymity in the research gatherings cannot be 100% guaranteed. However, all participants will agree to follow guidelines that will ensure a safe and confidential environment within and following the research gatherings. As part of this informed consent form to participate, all participants are also consenting to keep all research matters confidential. All participants will be encouraged to not share the contents of the discussion outside of the research gatherings; however, what other participants do with the information discussed cannot be guaranteed.
- The research facilitator will respect participant confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and remove names from the transcripts and all written documents. Alphanumerical codes will be used on data collection forms and cross-referenced with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
- You will not be identified by actual name in any reports of the completed study. People will be referred to by their roles, not given names (for example, family member, teacher, parent, teacher candidate).
- Interviews will take place at a location and time convenient with the participants and that ensures privacy. Data from interviews, all field notes, and research documents will be kept confidential at all times—the notes, data, and recordings obtained during the research will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in the researcher's offices at UBC Okanagan for a period of 5 years after the research has been published. At which time, all data, including feedback following review of transcripts will be destroyed—audio tapes demagnetized, paper shredded by the researcher, data deleted from the database.
- Data will be used by the researchers to prepare: a PhD research dissertation, research articles for presentation at national and international academic conferences and for publication in academic journals, workshop materials for in-service programs for school districts, and book chapters.
- The results of all discussions and conversations will be shared with all participants and you will have a chance to give feedback before official publication.
- You will be able to review the consent form before the first interview to make sure there is enough time to read and understand the documents.

**What are the benefits of taking part in this research? Will I get paid?**

- It is hoped that the results of this study will help educators, parents, and family members better understand the relationship between homes and schools, and how this relationship can enhance both the school experience and learning for children.
- The study cannot pay you for the time you provide to this research. If you require child minding to participate in this research, you will be compensated for the cost of child minding up to \$20 per session (up to 5 occasions for a maximum of \$100). You will be offered nutritional snacks at our gatherings.
- Participants interested in receiving a final copy of the research documents can either be sent a copy by the research facilitator or be provided with links to download the document from cIRcle.

**What if I have any questions about the research or my participation?**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Leyton Schnellert ([leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca](mailto:leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca)) (250) 807.9176 or Donna Kozak ([kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca)) (250) 718.5332.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-877-822-8598 or the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832. It is also possible to contact the Research Participant Complaint Line by email ([RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca)).



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### Participant Consent Form

#### "Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections"

*(KEEP THIS PORTION FOR YOUR RECORDS)*

- ☐ I understand that my participation in the above study is entirely voluntary and that I may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.
- ☐ I have read the above information and I have had a chance to ask any questions about the study and my involvement. I understand what I have to do and what will happen if I take part in this study. I freely choose to take part in this study.
- ☐ I agree to be audio recorded during the interviews.
- ☐ I understand the research gatherings will be audio recorded and/or videoed.
- ☐ I agree to be photographed during the research gatherings.
- ☐ I consent to my participation in this study and in signing this document I am, in no way, waiving my legal rights.
- ☐ I understand that conversations, discussions and the identity of other participants in this study should be treated confidentially unless a participant has given me personal permission to do so otherwise.
- ☐ I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.
- ☐ YES, I agree to participate in this research study.
- ☐ If I am a teacher candidate, I agree to participate in the study from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. (Indicate start and finish dates of intended participation).

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

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
(For sending research materials such as transcripts and reports for you to provide feedback).



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## Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections

As part of this project, photographs and video will be taken of you while you participate in the research gatherings. This form gives the researchers permission to share those photographs and or video recordings with people who are not part of this research team, in the ways described below. Please indicate below by initialing what uses of these records you consent to. This is completely up to you. Records will only be used according to what permission you have granted. In any use of these records, your name will not be included.

- Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

- Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

- Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Community, School District and Research Participant Demographics

Community Population Demographics (Statistics Canada, 2017) Total population: 194,822				
Language most spoken at home	Mother Tongue	Immigrant	Generation status	Aboriginal Identity
English - 94%	English – 85%	Prior to 1981-2016 - 13%	1 <sup>st</sup> generation Canadian - 15%	6%
French - 3%	French - 4%	2011-2016 - 15%	2 <sup>nd</sup> generation Canadian - 20%	<b>Visible Minority</b>
Other than English or French - 3%	Other than English or French - 11%		3 <sup>rd</sup> + generation Canadian - 63%	8%

School District Demographics (Superintendent/CEO Report, 2018)			
Total Student Population (2017)	Aboriginal students	New immigrant children enrolled	International students enrolled
22,697	2594 - 11%	1142 - 5%	555 - 2%

Research Participants' Demographics (Self-Reported) 21/25				
Language most spoken in home	Generation Status	Immigrant	Visible Minority	Aboriginal Identity
English – 92%	1 <sup>st</sup> generation Canadian – 27%	Prior to 1981-2016 - 12%	16%	4%
Other than English - 8%	2 <sup>nd</sup> generation Canadian – 33%	2011-2016 - 4%		
	3 <sup>rd</sup> + generation Canadian – 38%			

## **Appendix E: Pre-Inquiry Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Teacher/Teacher Candidate and Family Member Participants**

### **Teacher/Teacher Candidates:**

1. Describe situations when you have interacted with the families of your students in the past.
2. What does the term home-school connection mean to you?
3. What is the teacher's role in engaging families in their children's learning at school?
4. What is the family's role in supporting their children at school?
5. What kinds of literacies (knowledges) do children bring from home to school?
6. Why are you interested in exploring with families through this project?
7. What influences your curriculum planning?
8. What do you think a family-centered approach in schools would look like?
9. What do families have to offer you in your role as their child's teacher?
10. What do you as teacher have to offer families and their children?
11. What are your school's policies regarding home-school connections? How do they support your efforts to connect with families?
12. What are some of your own memories of your parent's involvement with your early schooling?
13. Finish this sentence.... I wish parents and families .....

### **Family Member Participants:**

1. Describe some of the past experiences you have had connecting or communicating with the school or teachers about your child.
2. What do you think your role is in your child's education? (in your child's school experience?)
3. What does the term home-school connection mean to you?



4. What do you think the teacher's role should be in connecting you with your child's learning at school?
5. How would you describe your child's learning strengths and gifts to his or her teacher?
6. Describe memories of your own school experiences when you were the same age as your child. How were your parents involved in your schooling?
7. What do you hope your child's memories of school will be?
8. How did your own school experiences influence your expectations of your child's education?
9. Why are you interested in participating in this research project?
10. What do families have to offer teachers?
11. What do teachers (and school) have to offer your child and family?
12. How does your child's school make you feel connected and welcome?
13. Finish this sentence.....I wish schools and teachers.....

## Appendix F: Participant Co-created Visual Canvas



**Appendix G: Parent/ Guardian consent for children to participate in research from  
teacher participant's classrooms**



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***Parent consent form for children to be part of research***

**Name of research study: Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Leyton Schnellert, Assistant Professor, UBCO Education

Email: [leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca](mailto:leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca) Phone: (250) 807.9176

**Co-Investigator/ research facilitator:**

Donna Kozak, PhD Candidate, UBCO Education, College of Graduate Studies

Email: [kozado@shaw.ca](mailto:kozado@shaw.ca) Phone: (250) 718.5332

**Why is this research study being done?**

Your child's teacher is participating in a research study to look at how the curriculum can include more chances for home and school to partner together around topics that include local community, cultures, languages, arts, history and literacy.

This research is part of a PhD program of study. A report will be publicly available on the internet via a digital storage place at UBC, called cIRcle.

**What will happen if my child takes part in this research study?**

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, we would ask him/her to:

- Allow the researcher to take photographs of him/her and his/her work in the classroom up to three different times between March and June of 2017.
- Be video-taped working in his/her classroom on regular learning activities.
- Agree to be part of his/her class when the researcher is present and taking notes about what the class is working on. (This will never focus on your child, but rather on the kinds of learning activities taking place in the classroom).

**How long will my child be in the research study?**

- Your child's classroom will be visited up to three times between March and June of 2017 for a maximum of 60 minutes each time.

**Will information about my child's participation be kept confidential?**

- Any information that is collected in connection with this study and that can identify your child will remain confidential. If your child is in a photograph or if his or her work is photographed, your child's name will not be used and will be referred to as "student." The research data will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in the researcher's offices at UBC Okanagan for a period of 5 years after the research has been published. At which time, all data including photographs and videos will be destroyed.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that my child can expect from this study?**

- There should be no risks or discomforts for your child to be in this study because the research will take place as part of their regular school learning activities in up to three class times from March to June, 2017.
- Photographs and video may be taken of children or their work while participating in their regular classroom learning activities during the researcher's visit. The researcher will avoid photographs and video of children's faces as much as possible and focus on their work activities. There may, however, be a chance of your child being recognized in the photos and video. (Please see the separate consent form for photographs and video).

**Are there any potential benefits to my child if he or she participates?**

- Your child will not directly benefit from participation in the study.
- The results of the research may help teachers work more closely with the families and homes of their students to make learning more meaningful and related to their lives.

**What are my and my child's rights if he or she takes part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want your child to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your child's participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you or your child. This will have no effect on your child's grades.
- The researcher will explain her purpose when visiting the classroom. At that time your child will also be given the opportunity to refuse to be photographed, have his or her work photographed, or be videoed.

**What if I have any questions about the research or my child's participation?**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Leyton Schnellert (leyton.schnellert@ubc.ca) (250) 807.9176 or Donna Kozak (kozado@shaw.ca) (250) 718.5332.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your child's rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint

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**Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections**

***Parent consent form for children to be part of research***

- *You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

☐ ***I give my permission for my child to participate in this research study.***

☐ ***I do not give my permission for my child to participate in this research study.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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**Co-creating discursive spaces that explore and foster home-school connections**

**Photo and Video Records Consent Form for Parents of Children in Research  
Classrooms**

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

- As part of this project, photographs and video *may* be taken of your child involved in learning in his/her classroom, as well as photos of your child's art or written work.
- This form gives the researchers permission to share those photographs and or video recordings with people who are not part of this research team, in the ways described below. Please indicate below by initialing what uses of these records you consent to.
- This is completely up to you.
- Records will only be used according to what permission you have granted. In any use of these records, your child's name will not be included and all efforts will be used to not include your child's face in the photos or video.

1. The photographs and video recordings can be included in publications and presentations about this research study that are seen by other researchers and by the general public.

Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

2. The photographs and video recordings can be stored indefinitely in an archive that will be available to other researchers for use in their research studies, including showing the photographs/recordings to participants in other research studies.

Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

3. The photographs and video recordings can be shown to students in university courses.

Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Video \_\_\_\_\_  
initials initials

I have read this form and give my consent for:

- ☐ use of the photos and video of my child learning in his/her classroom;
- ☐ use of photos and video of my child's art or written work.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_




## Appendix H: Summaries of Research Gatherings

Summaries of research gatherings			
	March 2	April 4	April 26
Acknowledgement of traditional territory of the Okanagan Nation; articulation of group norms – release roles; equal voices; all knowledge is valued; safe space; confidentiality; listen with open hearts and minds; trust each other and the process			
Storying & sharing funds of knowledge	Personal artifacts & stories of self, childhood, family, culture, history, identity	Ecological systems theory Stories of experiences within the mesosystem as a child, parent or teacher	Family-centered practice David's story (Pushor, 2010) Stories of how home & school connect
Collective reflection & synthesis of previous research gathering & participant field notes		one word headliners	hashtags
		harmony, bridge, caring, roots, experiences, family, 'connectidentity', community	#1 <sup>st</sup> connections; #setforlife; #proactive1ststepstowardsmindfulengagement; #bridgingcomfortabilityfora commongoal
Dialoguing & Problematizing  Researcher determined based on participant field notes and shared funds of knowledge.	How can the use of artifacts and stories about self be used in curriculum that teachers create in their classrooms and how could we translate this back into children's homes?	How might the ecological systems theory (Bronfrenbrenner, 1986) help us better understand the potential within home-school connections? What does the mesosystem mean to you from your perspective (parent or teacher)? How do our current structures, practices, policies and thinking either support the mesosystem layer of the ecological systems theory or on the flip side - does not support the theory?	What if schools were family-centered as well as or instead of child-centered?  How does our school district practice family-centeredness?  How are parents & families welcomed on the school landscape?
Critical Reflection	How do teachers know how to 'deal' with each parent?	What does the mesosystem mean to you from your perspective (parent or teacher)?	Is it possible that teachers' plates are already full?

Questions co-created through participant dialogue and problematizing	How do parents know how to connect with teachers and which teachers want to be connected with? How does their school work/curriculum connect with who they are?	How can home-school connections be made safer or tighter?	Why there are little options for children in high school start times? Family-centered practices are an ideal but there needs to be more adults – there are so many needs and not enough time or energy to do it all. What needs to happen in our world? Aware of being culturally aware of others –nice to ask someone who is safe, but do we ask the right people without offending? What are the professional/ethical boundaries meeting outside of formal school space?
Communicative Action	How can children's lifeworlds be used to enrich the curriculum? -invite parents to come to class and talk about themselves with students -Family night- parents, grandparent's presentation, investigate family roots, diversity in families -Evening events – more opportunity for working parents, dinners, potlucks/sharing food -Field trips – take the whole family (i.e.) farms -Cultural days – food, clothing, traditions – sharing in classrooms (people from community or families)	In the next month think about how to reach out to the "unreachable" – do something to make a safer place for people to connect – how can connections be made safer or tighter?  Create positive experiences for parents that have had negative experiences previously "kill with kindness" those that have negative connotations of school Proactive communication – teacher to parent and parent to teacher  Mindfulness – kids and parents – self reflect – self aware How do we LISTEN – awareness, validate, justify, show understanding, help clarify what they mean	How to be more family-centered in schools: Advocate the importance of making connections by valuing what all parents have to offer Acknowledging open communication between school/home – information that parents give Realizing that it is a "partnership" and we need to be open-minded Using many strategies and coming to these strategies together (include the student and parent) Communicating with the approach that the child's best interest and success is the focus Positive relations and open communications! Empathetic listening and respecting family values

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Social opportunities – overnight camping, etc. with classmates and families or stargazing nights with hot chocolate</li> <li>-connections with others through history and digging deeper; communicating with each other</li> <li>-bring in Elders to share insight and diverse wisdom</li> <li>-monthly breakfast – food, families, potluck celebration of different cultural foods</li> <li>-conferencing with students – relationships</li> <li>-evening events – ongoing opportunities for families to join together</li> <li>-Identity through "harmony day" – wearing traditional clothing</li> <li>-sharing circles – adding parents and families to this circle – artifacts of their lives – building community through backgrounds</li> </ul>	<p>TEACHER - facilitator, guide – maybe we need a new/safer job "title"</p> <p>Time to understand our differences – how do we support – what do different parents need?</p> <p>What can we do to foster safer relationships?</p> <p>Active listening</p> <p>Aware of feelings/body language</p> <p>Mindfulness</p> <p>Self-reflection</p> <p>Open mind</p> <p>Let students know teachers may not know everything.... They are also human</p> <p>Being facilitators</p>	
	May 17	June 14	
Acknowledgement of traditional territory of the Okanagan Nation; articulation of group norms – release roles; equal voices; all knowledge is valued; safe space; confidentiality; listen with open hearts and minds; trust each other and the process			
Storying & sharing	Literacies expanded; stories of the literacies that help shape you, your	Counter-narratives from the field: bringing home and school together to enrich curriculum	

funds of knowledge	family, your children, you as a parent or a teacher	
Collective reflection & synthesis of previous research gathering & participant field notes	Bumper stickers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families and educators unite for a brighter future!</li> <li>More questions than answers.</li> <li>Not museum pieces, but a tapestry.</li> <li>Home + school = community.</li> <li>Together diverse minds innovate.</li> <li>A new way of thinking.</li> <li>Common ground?</li> <li>Let's create a real partnership!</li> <li>Connect through diversity.</li> </ul>	Lived experience visual canvas 
Dialoguing & Problematising  Researcher determined based on participant field notes and shared funds of knowledge.	What literacies shaped your ways of knowing as a child? if you are a parent, how have you shaped your child's literacies? What are some literacies in your family? How can we come to know the different forms of literacy that children bring with them? How can children's life experiences, literacies and knowledge be used to enrich their school literacy learning? How can home-school connections support children's literacy learning?	Sharing the door metaphor visuals from pre-inquiry: What are your impressions of the metaphor and the visual representing it?  Disagree – teacher is a parent/mom – allows parents to see her in a different light -humans – not roles -teachers make mistakes (more than just the identity of teacher) and are open to compromises now (not all knowing or set in one way) -our identity has changed over time -teacher is student, is child, is volunteer -parents are teachers and learners -students are teachers and learners -Identity interrupted – breaking open current borders/barriers – Removing the door?!? child = a social being with needs, emotions, wants, desires, curiosities, individuals Student = an object; conforms; expectations same for all; school rules must be followed whether they make sense or not (Ie) hats off in schools – Why? teacher doing morning supervising using it as an opportunity to "chat"

		<p>-open door "policy" picture, where is the parent? Parent could be in the picture (in the background)</p> <p>- "policy" to invitation</p> <p>-is every door open?</p> <p>-allowing parents to volunteer gives them an appreciation for what goes on</p> <p>-when parents come through the door they can get a perspective on the class and classmates</p> <p>-are we making the assumption that all teachers want to invite people in?</p> <p>-perhaps the concept is more natural in younger grades?</p> <p>-teachers are now realizing with the new curriculum they need help</p> <p>-how do we create windows or tunnels instead of just doors?</p>
<p>Critical Reflection</p> <p>Questions co-created through participant dialogue and problematizing</p> <p>'Participant field notes from cluster discussions</p>	<p>What do children and families value?</p> <p>How do blended families establish and explain their values (step families or family in other countries)?</p> <p>Literacies and Knowing:</p> <p>Good Manners + Respect = respect others, respect property, respect yourself</p> <p>Mindfulness of others (i.e. empathy)</p> <p>Fairness is not equality; it's being equitable</p> <p>Family (spending quality time appreciating who you are with when you are with them)</p> <p>Not defining or judging people by their issues or current situation, but being mindful that everyone has a story, a history, a reason for being where they are now</p> <p>Religion</p> <p>Hard work ethic/perfectionist tendencies</p> <p>We need to be aware of our own literacies and how they influence</p>	<p>What has been interrupted in the traditional ways of connecting home and school around literacy learning in our stories?</p> <p>Creating the third space canvas guiding questions:</p> <p>How did coming together at or in third space in our research group influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• home-school connections for you personally;</li> <li>• your children's literacy learning at home if you are a parent or at school if you are a teacher?</li> <li>• influence your future actions, practices and relationships?</li> </ul> <p>Have you had any defining moments connected to our work together over the past 5 months?</p>

	<p>and shape those who are part of our community</p> <p>New literacies of sharing our thought process, struggles, questions, concerns, as opposed to previous conceptions of internalizing and moving on</p> <p>All behavior is communication</p>	
Communicative Action	<p>Literacies of homes and families and literacies of school – how might home school connections enrich the literacy learning of the children in our classrooms?</p> <p>Have conversations</p> <p>Be a listener; be in the moment</p> <p>Send something home</p> <p>Honor what they bring and let them guide their learning – more valuable and engaging</p> <p>Both have to be on the same page for it to be enriching to that child</p> <p>If the teacher understands the values of home/family, then the child feels connected.</p> <p>Both sides can give a little for each side to realize that we all care about the child and are there for the same purpose.</p> <p>We liked the idea of doing some work with the class and family around beliefs and inviting families in to collaborate around this.</p>	

## **Appendix I: Post-Inquiry Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Family Member and Teacher/Teacher Candidate Participants**

### **Family members:**

1. Describe what it was like participating in our inquiry with your child's teacher as a co-researcher(s)?
2. What was the most important part of the research process and what meant the most to you?
3. After participating in our inquiry, what does the term home-school connection mean to you?
4. How has your thinking changed about the teacher's role in connecting you with your children's learning at school?
5. Has your view changed about your role in supporting your child at school since participating in our inquiry? Describe.
6. What would you like your child's future teachers to know about him or her?
7. What did you learn about yourself as a result of our inquiry?
8. How would you describe your experience in the inquiry to other family members of children in the school?
9. How would you explain family-centered practice to future teachers of your children or to other families?
10. Has your perspective on what you have to offer your child's teacher changed as a result of our inquiry? If yes, describe how it has changed.
11. Since participating in the inquiry, what do you hope will change in the way home and school, teachers and families work together?
12. How will this inquiry influence future connections with your child's teachers and schools?
13. How could families be supported, connected and welcomed by schools?
14. Finish this sentence.....I wish schools and teachers.....

15. Would you be interested in reconnecting with the group next year? Would you be interested in helping me present this experience to others at presentations, conferences or be video-recorded about your experience?

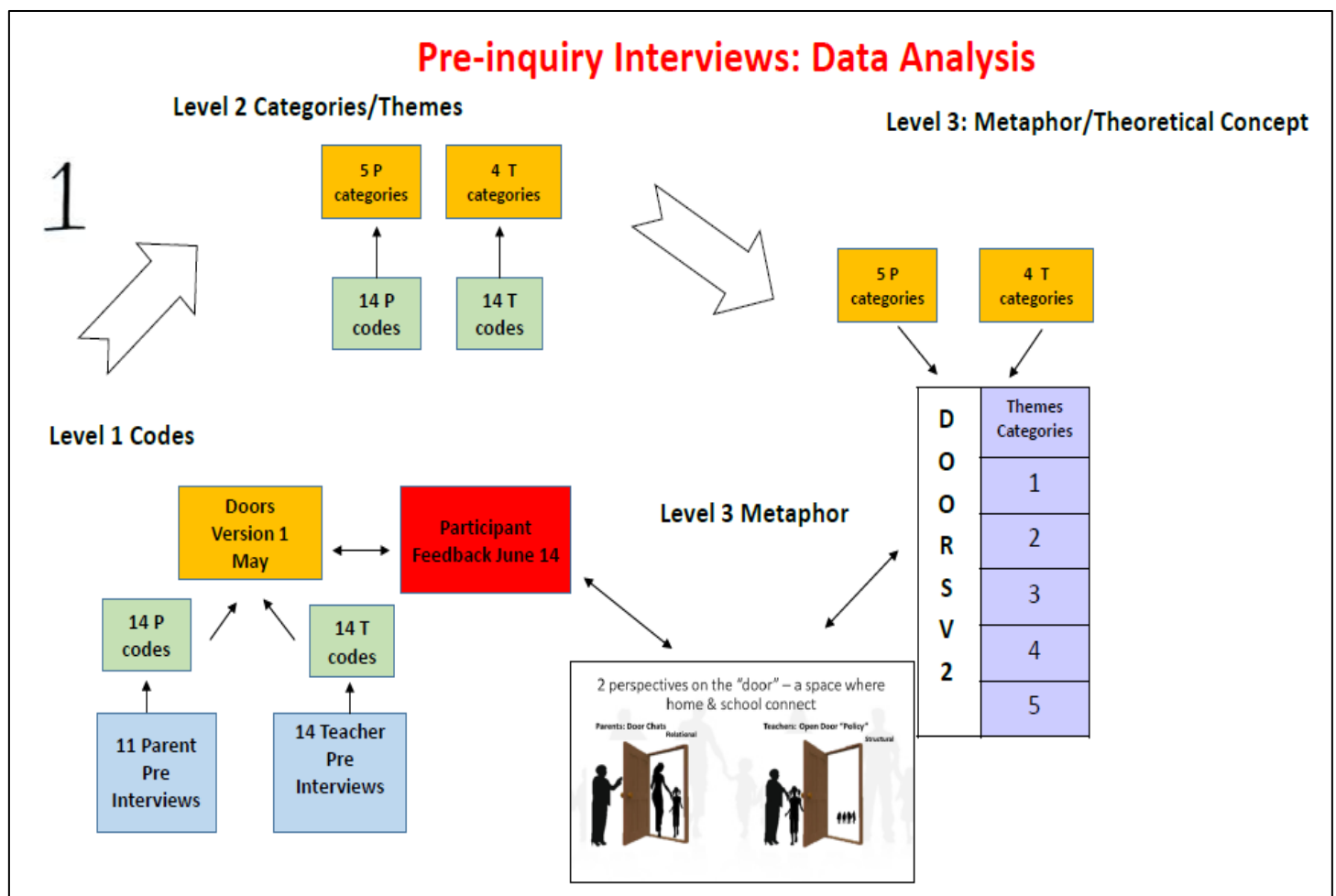
16. How might we keep this movement and momentum going forward?

### **Teacher and Teacher Candidate Participants**

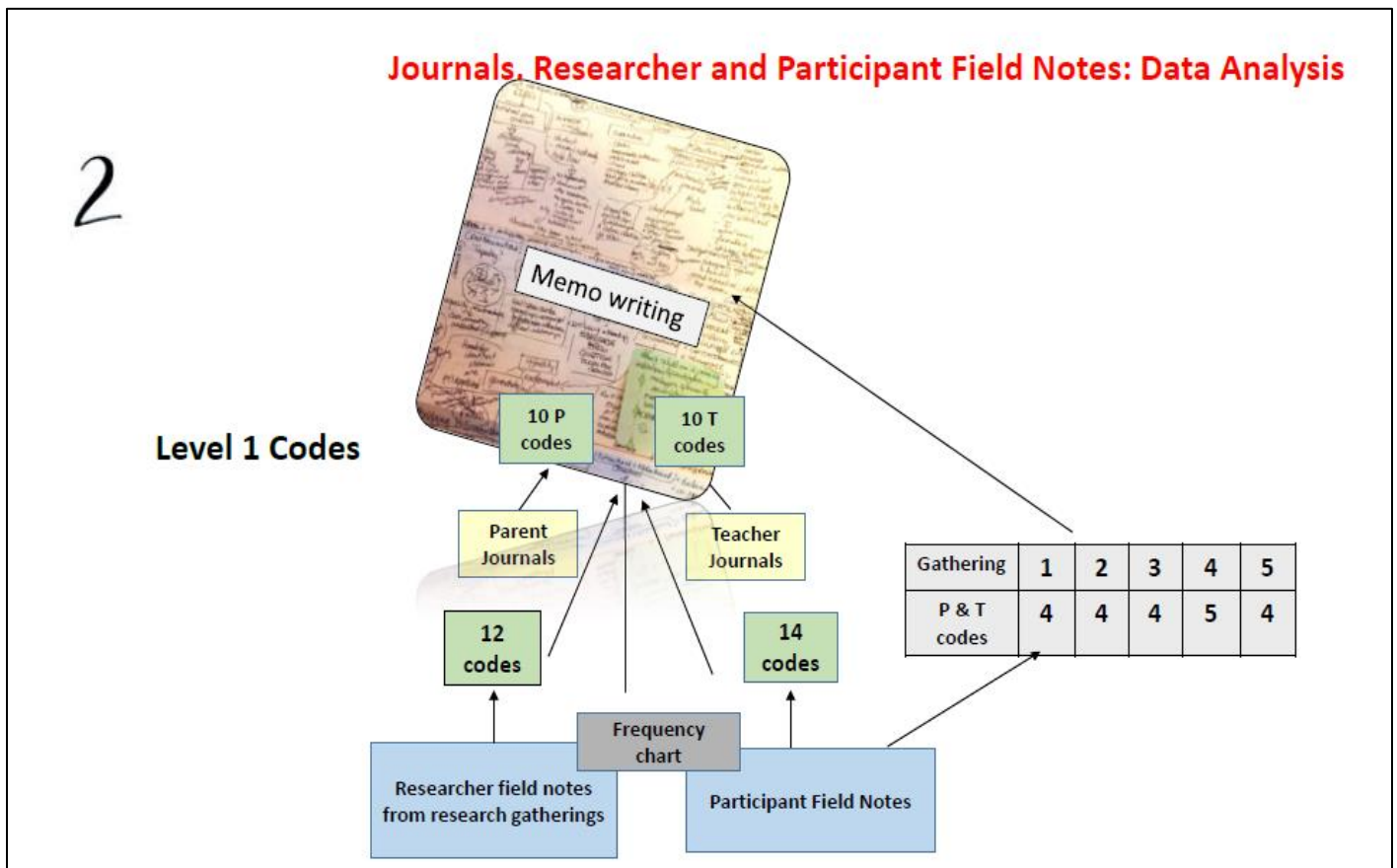
1. Describe what it was like participating in our inquiry with your family co-researcher(s)?
2. After participating in our inquiry, what does the term home-school connection mean to you?
3. How has your thinking changed about the teacher's role in engaging families in their children's learning at school?
4. What is your view about the family's role in supporting their children at school since participating in our inquiry?
5. How has this inquiry influenced your understanding of the kinds of literacies children bring from home to school?
6. What did you learn about yourself as a result of our inquiry?
7. How was your curriculum planning influenced by our inquiry?
8. How would you describe family-centered practice to colleagues who are not familiar with the terminology?
9. Has your perspective on what families have to offer you in your role as their child's teacher changed as a result of our inquiry? If yes, describe how it has changed.
10. Since participating in the inquiry, what do you as teacher have to offer the families and children in your classroom?
11. How do your school's policies promote support your understanding of home-school connections?
12. Finish this sentence..... I wish parents and families.....
13. Would you be interested in reconnecting with the group next year? Would you be interested in helping me present this experience to others at presentations, conferences or be video-recorded about your experience?
14. How might we keep this movement and momentum going forward?



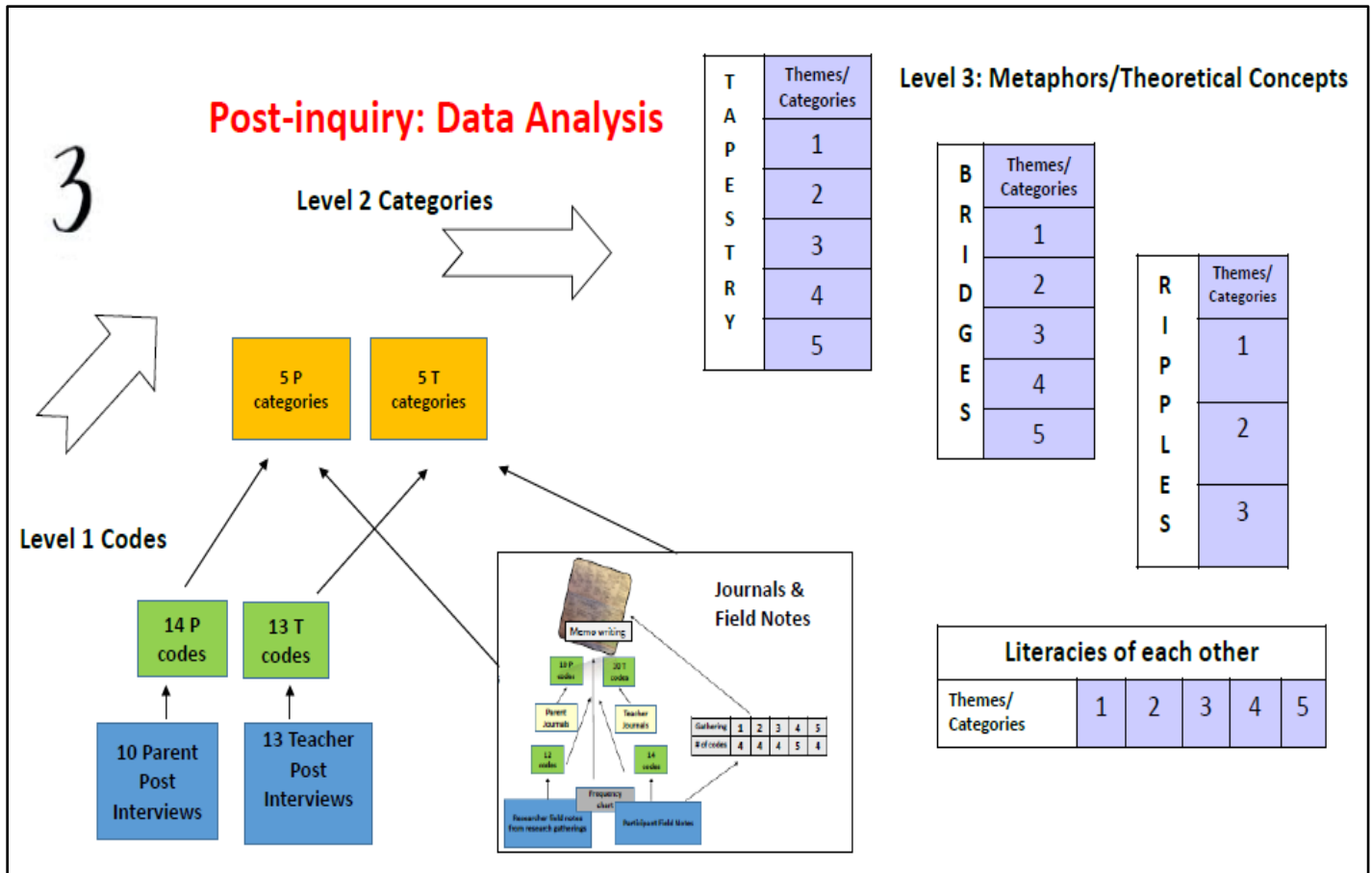
## Appendix J: Pre-Inquiry Data Analysis Diagram



## Appendix K: Artifact and Field Notes Data Analysis Diagram



## Appendix L: Post-Inquiry Data Analysis Diagram



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